DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 330 897 CE 057 791

AUTHOR Rosen, Verna
TITLE Beyond Higher Education. A Survey and Analysis of the Experience of Access Students Proceeding through the Polytechnic of North London and into Employment.
INSTITUTION Access to Learning for Adults, London (England).; North London Polytechnic (England).
REPORT NO ISBN-0-951-309
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 136p.
AVAILABLE FROM Access to Learning for Adults, Marlborough Bldg., Room 306, 383 Holloway Road, London N7 0RN, England (5.00 pounds).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Books (010)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Access to Education; Adult Education; *Adult Literacy; Educational Opportunities; *Education Work Relationship; Employment Opportunities; Foreign Countries; *Outcomes of Education; Racial Bias; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS England (London); Polytechnics

ABSTRACT

Access to Learning for Adults (ALFA) links education providers and organizations in collaborative work to extend and improve access to education opportunities for adults underrepresented in the system. A survey followed the progress, performance, and experiences of 86 former ALFA students, aged 25 to 49, in London, England, in their seeking of employment. Seventy-one students had successfully completed courses at the Polytechnic of North London. The interviews examined employment outcomes; relevance of education as preparation for work; student and teacher expectations; the reasons for withdrawal of the nine who did not complete courses; issues such as finances, child care, confidence, and prejudice; and academic, personal, and other gains from completing courses. The vast majority felt that ALFA was worthwhile. For those who succeeded, support from peers, family, and the college was significant. Problems were cited in the size and atmosphere of the college, low expectations of tutors, and racism and classism. Changes recommended by students included strenthening links between the polytechnic and higher education, clear definitions of policy and practices, greater personal autonomy, attention to race issues, a longer induction period, and financial assistance. For those who withdrew, "failure" was a concept with different interpretations. Results of the study led to development of a mission statement for access. (28 references and 7 tables) (NLA)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 308 897

Beyond Higher Education

A SURVEY AND ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENCE OF ACCESS STUDENTS PROCEEDING THROUGH THE POLYTECHNIC OF NORTH LONDON AND INTO EMPLOYMENT

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

VERNA ROSEN

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

R Ellman

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

alfa ACCESS TO LEARNING FOR ADULTS
The North & East London Open College Network

ACCESS
ALFA & PNL

ALFA (Access to learning for Adults) is the North & East London Open College Network which links education providers and organisations in Hackney, Islington, Tower Hamlets and the City of London in collaborative work to extend and improve access to education opportunites for adults who have traditionally been under-represented in the system. ALFA's work to-date has been in four main areas:

information on education opportunities for adults
a wide staff development programme
a range of research and development projects
an accreditation system for all adult learning

ALFA has produced a number of development project reports concerning access in its widest sense and Access to Higher Education issues, of which this is the latest one. ALFA has also recently been awarded Validating Agency status by the CNAA/CVCP under the national arrangements for validation of Access to Higher Education courses.

For further details of ALFA, its activities and publications please contact:

Charles Neal
Co-ordinator
ALFA
The Marlborough Building
383 Holloway Road
London N7 ORN

Tel: 01 - 607 9393 Fax: 01 - 607 2789 Ext 2555

The POLYTECHNIC OF NORTH LONDON, who co-funded this project with ALFA, are founder members of the network. PNL has a long tradition of providing full and part-time day and evening opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds and particularly welcomes mature students. Its Access and Continuing Education Centre promotes part time education and Access for the whole community. An Interfaculty scheme combines studies in different faculties and an Independent Studies programme is now offered. ACE is also active in credit accumulation and transfer developments and is a major centre for research and development in Access to Higher Education courses and issues which surround this work.

Acknowledgements

I should like to thank the staff in both the FE colleges (Kingsway and City and East London) and in PNL for their patience in answering my questions about courses and in providing me with their own personal student data. Without the latter this follow-up study would not have been possible.

In addition I want to thank Sue Pedder and the staff at ALFA for their support during the field study period; Gina Lawson and Mandy Jenkinson for their consistent good humour while typing and re-typing the report; and Charles Neal and Rita Ellman for their work on the final editing. Very special thanks are due to Julia Carter who undertook the daunting task of pruning the first draft when I was incapacitated for some months.

Most of all I should like to express my appreciation of the generosity with which ex-students responded to the project. I will always remember the warmth they showed in inviting me to their homes or travelling, often at considerable inconvenience, to share recollections with me.

Verna Rosen
February 1990

© ALFA 1990

ISBN: 0 951 309

FOREWORD

This report should carry a warning:

BEWARE : IT MAKES YOU THINK

Verna Rosen's survey breaks fresh ground in the Access to Higher Education literature. It follows up the progress, performance and experiences of some 86 former students, not only within City and East London College, Kingsway College and the Polytechnic of North London, but also, wherever possible, in their seeking of employment. These men and women had such confidence in their interviewer that they spoke without inhibition and with sincerity. They reveal their expectations and satisfactions, but also their doubts, heartaches and sacrifices. They portray the realities behind some of the statistics of an Access database.

The survey has, in essence, two major strands. The first deals with student performance. It is a story of success in that 71 received their degrees and diplomas and that 'only 9' did not complete their studies satisfactorily. But the reader's understanding of 'failure' is challenged in the case-histories of these 9 people and how, in the author's words:

> "The smallest movement either way made all the difference between completing a course, sometimes with very high grading, or falling away.'

The post-course developments show how the great majority not only obtained employment and frequent promotion, but also became engaged in extensive in-service courses and/or higher academic studies.

The second strand is often a disturbing one. Whereas many interviewees spoke appreciatively of the expertise and concern of staff in the two institutions, some were highly critical of the deficient insights which some tutors brought to their relationships and teaching strategies with these men and women. aged 25 - 49, many of whom were from ethnic minority backgrounds.

Making due allowance for possible conscious or unconscious special pleading, and the intrusion in some instances of psychological difficulties, nevertheless their criticisms cannot, and should not, be swept aside. Staff should have the opportunity to respond in whatever they feel to be the most appropriate way.

The issue of staff understanding of older students has become a national one with the expansion of Access courses. It has to be tackled honestly and constructively. In this context this survey deserves to make an incisive contribution to F.E. and H.E. staff development projects in the United Kingdom.

Verna Rosen has provided a clear, readable and practical interpretation of the intricate interaction of the Hidden Curriculum and Personal Construct Theory in the lives of these men and women.

The document is a challenge to reflection and action.

Ken Millins

Ken Millins.
12 February 1990

CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Research
1.2 Institutional Background
1.3 Historical Factors behind the development of Access.

II. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1 The Hidden Curriculum
2.2 Personal Construct Theory

III. APPROACH TO THE RESEARCH

3.1 Target Population
3.2 Identifying the Target Population
3.3 Contacting the Target Population
3.4 Responses
3.5 Interviews

IV. OUTCOMES

4.1 Employment
4.2 Unemployment
4.3 Employment Issues
4.4 Prospects and Promotions
  i. social workers
  ii. teachers
4.5 Extended Learning

V. PREPARATION FOR WORK

VI. EXPECTATIONS

6.1 Ideals
6.2 Self-testing and Family Improvement
6.3 Immigration and a Second Chance
6.4 Teacher Expectations
6.5 ...Continued into HE
  i. unacceptable qualifications
  ii. why Access?
6.6 New Knowledge

VII. FAILURE OR WITHDRAWAL: NINE CASE STUDIES

7.1 Unmet Expectations
7.2 Failure or Withdrawal?
7.3 Early Withdrawal - Family Pressure
7.4 Early Withdrawal - Failing the Course
7.5 Lessons to be Learned
7.6 Polytechnic Policy and Staff Expectations

VIII EXPERIENCES OF COURSES - ISSUES

8.1 Personal Experience and Hidden Curriculum
8.2 Finance
  i grants and financial hardship
  ii extra expenditure on the course
  iii financial hardship and family sacrifices
8.3 Child Care
8.4 Losing Relationships
8.5 Social Life at College
8.6 Transition to Higher Education
  i preparedness
  ii ethos

8.7 Confidence
- i to return to education
- ii non-Access mature student comparison
- iii time to build confidence
- iv lost confidence

8.8 Encountering prejudice
- i black perspective
- ii non-Access black graduates
- iii multiculturalism
- iv race awareness teaching
- v meeting racism at work
- vi stigma of Access
- vii the Patrick Harrington affair
- viii "mistaken scholarship"
- ix coping with practice placements
- x relationships with tutors
- xi support from the group

IX. GAINS

9.1 Advantages of Access
9.2 Opportunity
9.3 Return to Study
9.4 De-mystifying Education
9.5 Personal Growth
9.6 Reading
9.7 Knowledge of Subject Matter and Study Skills
9.8 Comparison with other Entry Routes
9.9 Discovering Learning
9.10 Other Gains
- i for teachers
- ii for social workers

X. FINAL VERDICTS

10.1 Mixed Feelings
10.2 A Success

X1. STUDENT OVERVIEW

11.1 Survival Strategies
11.2 What made People Suffer?
- i the institution
- ii the work
- iii the environment
- iv undeserving
- v low expectations of staff
- vi lack of involving student's life experiences
- vii shortage of confidence
- viii racism and classism
- ix stigma
- x academic power
- xi having to prove oneself continuously

11.3 Changes and Recommendations Advocated by the Students
- i links
- ii clear definitions
- iii specific disciplines
- iv development of personal autonomy
- v race issues
- vi induction
- vii teaching and learning practice
- viii family and finance issues

XII CONCLUSION: THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

XIII DISCUSSION

13.1 National Changes
13.2 Implications for the Polytechnic of North London
13.3 Access Accomplishments in Relation to Polytechnic Mission Statement

XIV A MISSION STATEMENT FOR ACCESS

XV RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

XVI BIBLIOGRAPHY

XVII APPENDICES

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the research

This is the report of a research project conducted over two years (part-time) within the Open College Network of North and East London (ALFA) and the Polytechnic of North London (PNL). The Polytechnic has a long history of collaborative Access courses beginning in 1975 when the first Access course in the country was developed jointly with City and East London College of Further Education, providing entry to a social work diploma (DSW) which awards the CQSW (Certificate of Qualification in Social Work). It was followed in 1976 by the Access to B.Ed. By 1986 when this research began, six other Access courses were established at the Polytechnic. This project is a study of former students who entered HE via Access. Most have successfully completed their studies at the Polytechnic of North London.

The current research was influenced by a project carried out in 1982 with a group of DSW Access students to enquire into how they adapted to a college course * Whereas in 1982 interviews were carried out with staff and students currently enrolled on one particular Access course and on the Polytechnic course which was fed by it, the research here has involved interviews with past students who have either completed or withdrawn from courses in four different Faculties of the Polytechnic of North London: Business, Science and Technology, Humanities and Social Studies. The views of staff were obtained either from tutors themselves (usually Access Link tutors) or from documents relating to the courses and merit a separate study. In addition three former students, not from Access were interviewed in order to gain some alternative view of the HE experience.

1.2 Institutional Background

In considering the students'experiences of passing through the Poly-

* V. Rosen ' The Adaptation of Students on a Special Access Course to the Demands of an FE Institution'.

technic it is important to remember that there are differences between courses; differences of epistemology, departmental ethos and physical resources, all of which have an effect on a student's ability to profit from a course, but which are not discussed in this report. It is necessary also to have in mind the varying social climate in which courses have developed historically. A brief review of the latter in relation to PNL's initiative follows.

1.3 Historical Factors Behind the Development of Access

In the early 1970s a declining economy was raising questions about the place of the immigrant communities so eagerly welcomed as a labour force after the war. Increasing intolerance was being shown (The Immigration Act of 1971, Enoch Powell's "Rivers Of Blood" speech, the election of National Front candidates in 1974). These were countered by attempts to legislate for greater social justice, culminating in the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act of 1976.

At the same time changes in social welfare had been taking place. The Health Service was reorganised, with greater community involvement. There was a revolution in the personal social services after the Seebohm Report of 1968 led to the Local Authority Social Service Act of 1970 which unified welfare provision in one Act. Local Authorities were to take responsibility for services which had previously been administered piecemeal. A new sort of "generic" social worker was to come into being. In 1971 national training for social work was set up under the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work. (CCETSW).

In education, a divide was observed growing between the achievements of black and white school pupils. The 1960s period of expansion of Higher Education, with its growth of new universities and polytechnics, had opened up the possibility of new kinds of students being considered for entry into HE.

In 1971 the Polytechnic of North London was formed out of an amalgam of the Northern and North Western Polytechnics and was in

the process of developing to meet the needs of a wider community. There was, consequently, a move to revise courses to meet newly perceived needs. As part of PNL's major rethink of social work training, consideration of what was wanted for the community included questions as to how to meet the requirements of minority groups. The first Access course for social workers was initiated (See Appendix Table 1. for later developments within the Polytechnic.)

At this point falling school populations and student numbers were not at issue. Nor was finance a critical question. The climate favoured innovation and there were sufficient staff available who were enthusiastic enough to commit their time voluntarily to making new ventures work.

However, by the mid-1970s, Government was showing an interest in projections of future rolls in HE, with the publication in 1978 of "Higher Education into the 1990s" (Discussion Paper) and, in the following year, of "Future Trends in HE." Access courses were appearing in other major cities.

The question, too of education for the disadvantaged/ethnic minority groups was being pursued. In the ILEA, first discussions of its Equal Opportunities Policy were being held. These were circulated in a series of papers between 1981 and 1985. The Interim Rampton Report, on 'West Indian Children in our Schools', came out in 1981 with recommendations that,

> **"LEAs should seek to recruit more West Indian Teachers and professionals and to ensure equal opportunities for them at all levels in the educational service.**
>
> **LEAs with West Indian populations should establish special Access courses for entry to training for teaching and other caring professions.**
>
> **The DES should find ways in which mandatory awards can be given to students on special Access courses."**

The last recommendation is a clear recognition of the value of Access

courses - but has not been implemented.

In the Spring of 1983 the ILEA Equal Opportunities Policy affected the resourcing of London Polytechnics by weighting its funding towards schemes which would increase access to HE for Inner London residents from disadvantaged groups.

However, resources were beginning to dry up. Expansion and experiment were becoming less and less possible as finance in educational institutions became more stringently controlled.

In addition, the Polytechnic of North London was the focal point for some fierce educational disputes over its "liberal" approach, culminating in the High Court over the Patrick Harrington controversy in 1984.

In May of 1983, the HMI inspectors visiting the Social Science Faculty were critical of its policy of admitting a large number of non-standard entrants.

In August of 1983 the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work published a report " Teaching Social Work for a Multi-racial Society". This asserted the need for attracting more students from ethnic minority groups,but warned of the danger that,

> **"special schemes set up to attract students from minority ethnic groups (might) carry a stigma or attract negative attention."**

Two years later an Access conference which reported on Ken Millins research for the DES demonstrated the high level of success that Access students had achieved nationally. This, together with the 1987 Government White Paper, 'Higher Education: Meeting the Challenge' have ensured that Access is now an accepted route for entry to Higher Education.

Thus it can be seen that students entering HE by way of an Access course are entering a highly controversial area and it is understandable if some approach it with caution.

II THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1 The Hidden Curriculum

As long ago as 1970, Benson R Snyder writing in "The Hidden Curriculum", asked:-

> **"how does it happen that students, often the most able, turn off from their education? Why do honest, imaginative efforts to enrich, to open up, to alter the curriculum fail to engage so many students?"**

and in answering the question he demonstrated,

> **"the importance of the context, the emotional and social surround of the formal curriculum"**

For any educational institution there must always be the question as to what makes a course work. Is it the programme, the quality of the teaching and other resources, or is it the calibre of the students? Final pass rates are an indicator of success. How its graduates and diplomates fare on approaching employment is another measure of its value. How the students develop as people is yet another, but less easily discovered.

It is not the purpose of this survey to analyse course results in order to evaluate student success rate. Evidence of Access student final results in statistical form has been provided by Michael Conolly (New Community Vol.12 No 1 Winter 84/85). Here, the aim is twofold: to discover how students have been employed on leaving the Polytechnic of North London and, secondly, to gain an impression of the particular nature of the experience which they feel they have undergone during the whole process, from applying for Access, moving on to a Polytechnic course and in entering employment. What do they perceive that they have really learned from HE?

The "hidden curriculum" has been a powerful influence for these students as for others. How powerful it is is explored in this project.

Most of these students had been turned off from their school education which, while it may have been full of "honest, imaginative efforts to enrich, to open up, to alter the curriculum", has also usually been undertaken within the inner city with all the constraints of limited resources. Moreover, for most it has been an education either interrupted by immigration or one which has not implicitly reflected the culture of the students or recognised the inhibiting force of racial, class, or gender difference. (In this study the question of age was also raised by some of the more mature students.)

It is not easy to identify the precise way in which these students have been affected by their emotional and social surroundings in tackling the curricula offered them, but they demonstrate considerable concensus in what they say about their education and they say it with force.

The 1982 investigation into how students on an Access course to social work at PNL adapted to the demands of entering a further education college unfolded a mismatch of staff/student perceptions as to what processes those mature students underwent in the course of returning to education. Mostly women with families, on limited incomes, mostly with poor experiences of the educational system in this country and all black, they reacted to the institution in ways which were often mystifying to the staff. The latter were a committed group of people bent on overcoming educational disadvantage, but whose life experiences were often remote from those of most of the students. Although the students were enthusiastic about the prospect both of gaining new knowledge and of entering a course of professional training, and the tutors were pre-disposed to try to understand the needs of the students, the opportunities for mutual misunderstanding were many. There was caution concerning the motives of white middle- class teachers in a white middle-class college on the one hand and, on the other, stereotyped expectations of the students and constraints arising from the limitations both of the institution and subject matter.

The earlier project concluded that "what was being exposed by staff and students was the complicated interplay of hidden and explicit agendas" which were suggested by Snyder in 'The Hidden Curriculum'. This is

'the double system' which exists in educational, as in other, institutions, where:-

> **"what is crucial is not the presence of formal rules and informal responses but rather the kinds of dissonances that are created by the distance between the two and the way that employers and workers, parents and children, professors and students work out, clarify and discuss the conflicts and issues that are often concealed".**
> **(The Hidden Curriculum p.9)**

All the students:-

> **"find that they must develop a series of stratagems, of ploys and adaptive techniques, to deal with the choices that confront them". (The Hidden Curriculum p.10)**

Staff also, in operating the system, have to make choices which, for them too, are affected by many factors external to the curriculum.

2.2 Personal Construct Theory

In the discussion of these issues during interviews it appeared that the language, concepts and images used by those interviewed varied considerably so that, in some instances quite similar events were described quite differently according to the standpoint of the speaker, eliciting in the interviewer quite different interpretative perspectives on different occasions.

This resulted in a number of theoretical standpoints being considered. At one point it appeared that the "strategems, ploys and adaptive techniques" of Snyder could best be considered in the light of psycho-dynamic theories of development. Indeed, Snyder suggested, the inferences to be made,

> **"may bear on the range of man's defence against anxiety"**
> **(Foreword p.x11).**

he found,

> **"that a hidden curriculum determines to a significant degree, what becomes the basis for all participants' sense of worth and self-esteem. It is this hidden curriculum, more than the formal curriculum, that influences the adaptation of students and faculty" Foreword.pxiii)**

A number of theoretical viewpoints were considered. Each of these provided a legitimate perspective from which to describe the workings of the hidden curriculum so vividly described by both students and staff in the earlier study.

It was, however, George Kelly's comprehensive theory of personal constructs, with its explicit lack of differentiation between cognition and emotion, and its concept that the self is interpreted through the way in which it is seen to be perceived by others which provided the most illuminating view of what seemed to be happening to this group.

For,

> **"construct theory is an attempt to understand people in terms of the way each experiences the world and to understand their behaviour in terms of what it is designed to signify for the behaving person.'**
> **(Bannister and Fransella: Inquiring Man. p.40)"**

It was this that in the 1982 project provided a useful standpoint from which to consider the ways in which the two curricula, the formal and the informal, interacted.

In the present follow-up of Access students there is much that is similar in the reactions of these ex-students to the social work students of the former study, some of whom are also included here. In particular, their responses demonstrate the powerful effect of the hidden curriculum on their functioning in college.

To understand how this is perceived and acted on in different ways by

different students it is necessary to try to see events through their eyes. Consequently, it is from the perspective of construct psychology that they will be discussed.

III APPROACH TO THE RESEARCH

3.1 The Target Population

Seventy one of the eighty six interviewed had successfully completed coursesat PNL. Nine had withdrawn, either voluntarily or compulsorily.* Three were intermitting, 3 were non -Access graduates who had not qualified at PNL.

The target population had studied on a range of courses and came from a range of cohorts. Students who had been on the Access to the Diploma in Social Work (DSW) represented cohorts from 1975 (first year of entry to Access course) to 1983 with corresponding qualifying dates from 1978 to 1986.** Thus, nine cohorts had completed this Access year and qualifying course. For other courses there was a narrower range of cohorts both because the Access courses had developed later and because the corresponding HE courses take longer than the DSW - eg. the B.Ed takes three to four years as opposed to the two years for a DSW, so five cohorts had progressed through Access to degree. Consequently, the target population of ex-students who had completed their HE study came in the main from DSW and B.Ed courses. From a second population who had left a course before completion, members came from a range of courses.

Whereas all D.S.W. and Business Studies students were black, not all those from other Access courses were from ethnic minority groups. Most, but not all, came from working class backgrounds. By far the largest number of people interviewed were women. This reflects the composition of the Access courses. Ages ranged from twenty four to forty nine.

* Tables Appendix 2 & 3 give details of the students interviewed by cohort, qualifying status and as a proportion of the total population for each cohort.

** Since some students went into employment after a 3 year B.Ed and others after a 4 year B.Ed Hons. cohorts are problematic.

Twenty eight former B.Ed students were interviewed, of these one had failed part of the course and two had withdrawn for domestic reasons. All had studied at the Polytechnic between 1980 and 1987.* It proved impossible to contact students from the first two cohorts but all others were represented.

Forty seven former social worker students were interviewed. Of these thirty eight were women and all, except two from East Africa, one of whom was of Asian origin, were of Caribbean background. The social workers represented cohorts from 1978 (ie. all cohorts). Only two of the forty seven had withdrawn. One of these was intermitting for a year while re-submitting essays.

For other newer courses numbers were much smaller and since there was little chance for cohorts to have qualified the target population generally consisted of early withdrawals:

Two from Business Studies;
One from Law
One from Humanities, intermitting for a year
Three from science: one withdrawn for domestic reasons, one intermitting for a year and one qualified.

Three non-Access graduates also interviewed were respectively; two men, both of African origin, from science courses, one at a university and one from a polytechnic outside London; and one woman who had studied sociology at a London polytechnic and was at time of interview a Further Education lecturer.

Apart from nine all had successfully completed their courses. Interviews with these nine are presented in depth, since their withdrawal or unsuccessful performance can give useful insight into the problems Access students meet. The decision to focus on the experience of these

*Where ex-students are referred to by year, the year is that of qualifying from the HE course.

nine ex-students arose from the knowledge that often in education, as elsewhere, most can be learned about how to make a course successful by studying where "failure" occurs. Indeed, in this study it is clear from people's observations that the bridge between success and failure is a very narrow one - the two groups reported similar difficulties and perceptions of their courses. The smallest movement either way made all the difference between completing a course, sometimes with very high grading, or falling away. For those who did not qualify it is important to understand that withdrawal has meant different things to different people. Furthermore, the award of a qualification was not the same thing as being successful.

It must be emphasised that in spite of the concentration on learning from failure in this report, the overwhelming verdict of those interviewed, as a whole, was of positive success, not only in academic achievement, but also of hurdles passed (often at great personal cost) leading to growth of confidence and motivation to continue learning.

3.2 Identifying the Target Population

Tracking and identifying students in a follow-up study is always difficult. The task proved even more difficult than expected since PNL had made a policy decision (since reversed) not to appear to stigmatise Access students by either keeping them as a distinct group in the record system or by marking them out in any way as individuals. Thus it was impossible for the institution to trace former Access students who had passed through or were still attending the Polytechnic.

At a personal level it was slightly easier: Access course tutors in the FE colleges had the names and addresses of former students and some link tutors at the Polytechnic had similar information. This together with departmental lists and a letter sent to tutors finally produced a total of 490 students who had entered the Polytechnic since 1976 from Access courses. Of these 270 had completed their courses. The rest were studying currently at PNL.

Though the vast majority of students came from formally linked, guaranteed place Access courses six students had come to PNL from more general, multi-exit non-linked courses.

3.3 Contacting Target Population

As a pilot exercise a questionnaire/proforma and letter, describing the project and requesting an interview, were sent to thirty former students from two Access courses - Access to Social Work and Access to B.Ed. Only four replies were received. This was followed by a mailing to a further two hundred contacts. In addition to the information previously circulated, the mailing included a letter of introduction from a tutor known to the recipient (ie. the tutor on the Access course or Head of Department of Teaching Studies at the Polytechnic of North London). The response rate was again low and nine replies were received. Many addresses proved to be out-of-date.

The evidence from the pilot was so conclusive that it was decided to try

a different and more informal approach. Since the researcher had herself been the course tutor on the Access to Social Work course for a number of years she was able to talk to past students with whom she was still in contact. They in turn put her in touch with others and meetings were arranged by phone. Though time-consuming and costly this method produced results. The response rate was high and individual reactions were positive.

That former social-work students proved easier to reach than all other groups was in part due to their knowing (and trusting?) the researcher, but two additional factors proved significant: - first their working conditions which made it relatively easy to talk to them during work hours once they had been located; and second the professional network of social workers which made it easier to trace contacts through contacts already made. These professional links and networks did not appear in other professions eg. teaching.

However the success of the informal method was such that the researcher was able to ask Access course tutors in FE and link tutors at the Polytechnic to contact former students in the same way and existing or former B.Ed Business Studies and Science and Technology students were contacted similarly. Contacting students from the Access to Law course proved very difficult since the very small numbers of students involved at the time (1986) had all failed on the degree course. The responses of that group of students were therefore not obtained for this research in any systematic way, however one former Access to law student was interviewed as were staff and existing students.

3.4 Responses

Apart from three people from the DSW course who did not turn up for interview after repeated appointments and one B.Ed. graduate, all those contacted by telephone agreed to an interview without difficulty.

When the first approach by letter was mentioned at interview many students said that they had not received it. Some said they had not got round to answering it yet. Some said that they had put it in the

wastepaper basket, because they had distrusted the motives of the Polytechnic and, indeed, of all researchers who approached them by letter. There were also some dark hints from a few who were interviewed that some of their friends were not willing to talk about their education either because they didn't know to what use the research would be put or because they had had a hard time on the course and wanted nothing more to do with the Polytechnic. It was not, however, possible to confirm this.

A certain degree of caution was expressed by black interviewees. The first B.Ed students who agreed to be interviewed were from a part-time Access course and were white. It is clear from discussing the issue with a number of black students that there is a certain resistance to being singled out to be researched - "Are you asking the white students? Who of my friends has answered?" were common questions. In the event only one student, when asked by telephone to take part, refused to be interviewed. For the rest, once having agreed to talk the students, black and white, could not have been more helpful and for the most part appeared to be speaking without reserve, evaluating their experiences quite freely.

3.5 Interviews

Purely factual questionnaires about work undertaken since leaving were completed by the interviewer at the beginning of the interview.

After a preliminary explanation of the aims of the project, interviews were conducted as informal conversations with the interviewer interrupting as little as possible.

In the preamble, people were asked to provide an account of their work progress since leaving PNL and then to comment on their views of their whole Access and HE experience as a preparation for work.

It was suggested that they should begin by saying what brought them to an Access course in the first place and then to relate:

what they had found supportive while going through the course and what they had found difficult;

what elements they would like to change in either the Access course or in the PNL course;

how much effect did they consider their entry into higher education via an Access course had had on them as people and on their lives;

what did they consider the best way for mature people without the formal academic entry qualifications to gainentry to HE.

People talked about what was most important to them in reflecting on these issues so that there was a problem of later organisation of material. However, the accounts they gave were highly productive of views and feelings, in addition to factual information (as perceived from each individual's standpoint).

IV OUTCOMES

4.1 Employment

Of the eighty six former students interviewed all but four were in employment. Eighty were in employment related to the course they had taken. The majority were social workers and teachers.*

Of the 47 social workers interviewed all but one had completed the course. Another was intermitting for a year at the time of interview, while re-submitting essays. All were working and the one woman who had failed to complete was also working in an area related to social work and had received promotion.

Of the twenty eight teachers interviewed three had withdrawn before completion (see Chapter viii). The remaining twenty five had all graduated and all but one were now working as teachers. Most were in their first posts. One woman was working as an administrator in a religious organisation.

In other disciplines, only one, a scientist, was interviewed who had completed a course.

Of the male non-Access students both were now studying for higher degrees. The woman was a Further Education lecturer. Their responses were interesting in providing some indication as to how specific to Access were the perceptions transmitted by ex- Access students. No statistical comparison was intended.

4.2 Unemployment

For the social workers and teachers there was no real unemployment.

All but three of the social workers, all men, who had been out of paid employment for a few months, had been so out of choice or personal

* See Tables Appendix 4 and 5 for DSW and BEd. Employment Experience.

circumstances. The women often saw this period as an opportunity to get their homes straight and tended not to talk of it as unemployment. Some men too had welcomed the chance to catch up on other parts of their lives - one qualified social worker from an early cohort had not found work quickly (from choice) and had written a book on volcanoes and undertaken further study for a degree. He now had a senior post in education welfare. A few had to wait for the post of their preference, but most people had found work in London immediately.One of the men had waited three months for a first post in the Midlands where his home was, found employment in an agency which then closed and was obliged to return to London to find work, leaving his family again to do so.

The teachers had all obtained work immediately. Like some social workers they sometimes did not get the work of their choice straight away. Two women who had withdrawn from courses had not found paid employment, but were caring for their children. A third had found social service work with handicapped children.

One science graduate interviewed had been unemployed for a year at the time of interview. This woman had a BSc in Chemistry but she had not obtained the class of degree she had anticipated due to ill health in her final year. She could therefore not pursue her aim of studying for an MSc and without it she could not obtain the type of work she had hoped for. For her the experience of Access and study in HE was disappointing.

> **"The Polytechnic was a disaster, a waste of three years. The knowledge was useful but the results are disastrous."**

At the time of interview she was studying book-keeping and hoped to take a part-time MSc while working,

> **"at anything...probably book-keeping or clinical chemistry".**

Another woman who had withdrawn from a science course was working in a school for handicapped children.

Two men who had withdrawn from Business Studies had both been unemployed for a time. Both had, separately, been on community programmes, both had worked with young children and both had been on counselling courses. One of them, six months after dropping out of his course, was still smarting from the pain of not succeeding.

4.3 Employment Issues

In the main, for those teachers and social workers who had qualified, and for some who had not, obtaining work appeared to have been easy and there had been subsequent opportunities for promotion.

One social worker, a woman seconded onto the course from a non-professional grade in her local authority, had been obliged to return to a position at that grade and was still awaiting a professional post. Others had not immediately obtained exactly what they were looking for. Several teachers had not been given the schools of their first choice. However, most were satisfied with the jobs they had even where these had not been their original preference. Indeed they often expressed the intention of continuing with the age group or social work that they were working with.

Both teachers and social workers expressed distress at the difficulties experienced by their clients and argued strongly for more resources and better training and support to deal with needs they saw around them. Some intended to seek less frustrating jobs.

Unemployment is defined as being without paid work: for many of these people in spite of their lack of finance the absence of paid work had been the occasion for a holiday; for rest, study, an opportunity to travel or be with family in a way not possible before because there had not been the security of a salary to come. For some, even with that knowledge, there had been some anxiety about making ends meet in the short run. On the whole, however, for these ex-students the lack of work had been positively pleasurable - a release from the pressures of the course.

For others, when unemployment was associated with failure, either of the course or to meet their own goals, then there was serious disturbance within the individual, causing self-doubt and uncertainty as to future action. The anxiety provoked in one instance was sufficient to attack core constructs and bring on a major personal crisis. Like Eliza Doolittle none of the people who had dropped out had considered returning to their pre-Access employment. It was no longer psychologically available to them. All but one, they had, however, returned to considering alternative earlier aspirations: social work; accounts; spending time on the family, being self-employed. The one most at sea had had no other previously defined ambition. Education, and above all a degree, had been his dream.

4.4 Prospects and Promotions

i. social workers

There had been thirty six promotions for twenty of the forty seven social workers interviewed and sixteen had taken up specialisms (see Appendix Table 4). Interestingly the specialisms reflect the social workers' experiences and backgrounds - namely the importance of childhood and issues of racism. Thus eight social workers had specialised in work with children and three were working with young people Three social workers were working in ethnic minority units and seven had chosen to specialise in adoption and fostering, an area of work currently concerned with racism. At a time when social work overall was tending to expand in geriatric areas these specialisms were all the more significant. Now the national concern around child abuse appears to follow their interest!

Two had become social work lecturers.

Two were local authority Training Officers.

ii. teachers

Of the twenty five people interviewed twenty one were all working as teachers. They had all qualified between 1984 and 1987 and had thus

not had a long period in which to gain promotion. Most were in their first posts though nine had changed jobs once and two had moved twice. Four had gained promotion and four had special responsibility but without upgrading (see Appendix Table 7).

The sample interviewed included sixteen teachers of Caribbean origin, ten of European and one each from Asian and African backgrounds. Again it is interesting to note the areas of specialism the teachers had entered. These included special needs and language units in multi-ethnic primary schools (3). Three other teachers from Caribbean backgrounds were working in schools with over 80% non-English mother-tongue children.

4.5 Extended Learning

The social workers had pursued a total of one hundred and twenty two in-service courses of varying lengths. In addition fourteen former students had begun or completed study at degree or post- graduate level. (See Appendix Tables 6 & 7).

Like the social workers, the teachers had been involved in in- service courses. Five were taking post-graduate degrees whilst a further ten were hoping to do so in the future. A number said that they did not want to continue academic study - "Not immediately, any how." The difference here between social workers and teachers can be explained as arising from the length of their previous courses: for social workers this was three years and for teachers four to five, including the Access year in each case. Where the teachers often expressed the need for a break from study and time to consolidate, the social workers felt that they had only just begun to feel the bit between their teeth and were ready to go.

V PREPARATION FOR WORK

Both teachers and social workers agreed that they had learned much from their courses, above all self-confidence, and they went into detail about what they had gained. Teachers, in particular, said that they were better equipped than others they met and frequently echoed this secondary school teacher,

> **"I'm glad I went on the Access course. The experience of Access and the BEd. multi- cultural courses help you to deal with school as it really is. I felt better prepared than those from some other PGCE courses. Some teachers are quite demoralised and leave. One science teacher is thinking of leaving after one year. I wasn't sure of my initial reception, but after my first teaching experience my worries were gone." (Teacher 1986)**

Or this infant teacher,

> **"we were better prepared than those in the profession for a long time. English as a Second Language was a very useful course, enabling us not to panic at the 'silent period' of the new child. I try not to use English speaking children as message carriers. I have to be careful. Coping with a mixed classroom comes from the PNL course, awareness training and second language training. Without that I would be throwing up my hands in despair like the others." (Teacher 1986)**

Some however, felt that the theory they had been taught did not prepare them sufficiently for the realities of what they met in classroom or social work agency. They advocated a greater practical approach, for example, to handling difficult children, to meeting with parents or to child abuse. On the other hand, a number agreed with the following teacher's view.

> **"The work was really geared to what we actually do. An awful lot was learned on teaching practice."**

Some had not been alerted to the realities of pressurised social work

teams when they had learned good practice on the course. They were thrown in at the deep end and floundered, often experiencing great anxiety about the responsibilities they were expected to shoulder.

> **"I'm not an expert on child abuse. I was expecting training and to do duty sessions, but I've been landed with cases. I wasn't trained at PNL to handle abuse cases. Its been a worry. Being a new person its hard to say no." (Social Worker 1986)**

Many felt that it was unrealistic to expect any course to provide all the answers. Much of what they said did not necessarily relate to their having come into training via the Access route, since it is clear that the major part of what these former Access students were describing was what any student in training might have experienced on entering work. Very few said that having done an Access course affected them in later employment.

What did disturb a number of people were factors relating to social mobility and to being black. There were also difficulties for those who entered work with high ideals of helping others. There was the problem of divided loyalties for black workers. Some people talked about the need for preparation in staff relations.

> **"I was not at all prepared for work. The course prepared me enough on the surface to get by, but not enough to get by with the stresses and pressures or to understand the organisation of social work. Black social workers were getting to the stage of being afraid because other black colleagues, in Housing and elsewhere, suggested we were Uncle Toms because we were supporting white colleagues in looking at issues 'professionally'. So I looked for another job."**
> **(Social worker 1982).**

Both teachers and social workers recognised that they had much to offer to their black and working class students and clients in terms of understanding and of providing role models. They had also been instrumental in raising awareness of racism often at considerable cost to themselves. They often found themselves in ambiguous positions,

balancing their feelings for their own community against their reasoned convictions as to how to act in particular circumstances. Their training often advocated action which was inimical to their upbringing.

On the courses, the differences that there were between them and the other students arose from the different constructions of higher education that each group held. It took them perhaps longer to recognise that it wasn't going to provide all the answers. When they did change their constructs and viewed their training as a source of internal change, not the "mechanical" model some of them expected, they began to develop in ways they had not expected. They then described their education as beginning a process that they expected to continue perpetually.

VI EXPECTATIONS

6.1. Ideals

The experiences of the interviewees whilst on their Access and subsequent HE courses were shaped in part by the motivations and expectations they brought with them (in many cases formed as much as 10 years previously) as a result of childhood experiences of immigration, schooling and family circumstances. For many of those interviewed Access was part of a generalised aspiration to something more from life.

> **"What I wanted was not necessarily from college but from life." (Social Worker 1983)**

For many there was a hope that they would be able to change society.

> **"I expected everything from the course. They were going to teach me how to save the world." (Social Worker 1982)**

6.2 Self-testing and Family Improvement

Many were, even when they hadn't verbalised it before coming on the course, aiming to prove something to themselves or to friends.

> **"I wanted to know that I had more than a cabbage up there." (Teacher)**

Women, who had been trapped early by pregnancy had taken Access courses both for the sake of their children

> **"I had to get off my arse and do something for him." (Business Studies student)**

and for themselves once the children had grown up.

"I was terrified of exams and rather low on self-esteem." (Humanities student)

Most of the women with children, regardless of social class referred to the isolation and subsequent loss of confidence, of child-rearing and domestic life. For them Access was:

"a way into education calmly' (Ibid).

6.3 Immigration and a Second Chance

Many interviewees felt let down by their schooling, either through illness, teacher shortages, teachers' low expectations or the particular trauma of immigration.

Sometimes the latter had involved separation from parents and subsequent emotional upset.

"I had been a long time away from my parents...I left home a year and a half after joining the family. My mother was not as I expected, nor was the country.....In Jamaica I had studied hard and had no problems with behaviour. I was a prefect...." (Social Worker 1984)

In England he had been treated as a problem and placed in a remedial class where he excelled. He then moved onto Ordinary National Certificate which he failed and was finally expelled from. This students' mistrust of the education system remained with him on his Access course and he generalised it as a feeling that:

"adult students, particularly black students, bring a great deal of anger and suspicion into the course."

Other people for whom immigration had not been so obviously traumatic had nevertheless suffered as a result. They had found the size and complexity of an English school intimidating after their experience of smaller classrooms in the West Indies. Others mentioned the

hostility they had experienced from their teachers on arrival at new schools in England.

> **"When you have adults who are hostile to you as well as peers, you can't understand. A teacher put a red line through my maths although they were right, because it was the wrong style. This set me up for the rest of my education." (Social Worker 1983)**

6.4 Teacher Expectations

Interviewees who had not suffered the trauma of immigration had nevertheless been the victim of teachers' perceptions: some, despite good exam marks, received consistently critical remarks on attitude or behaviour: a teacher had had to fight the school to be allowed to sit her 'O' levels. In some instances teachers' perceptions had become self fulfilling: a social worker who had worked very hard at school in order to go onto Higher Education and had received school prizes had been part of a class which had given up and listened to pop records instead of studying. She gave as a reason for the situation the low expectations of teachers teaching classes with large numbers of Caribbean pupils.

> **"They were assumed to need the lowest form. All my cousins left and then took 'O' levels and now have good jobs and clear objectives."**

Low expectations were not always restricted to Caribbean pupils and there were other problems in inner-city schools such as staff shortages.

6.5 ...Continued into HE

i. unacceptable qualifications.

A few saw Access as a means of fulfilling themselves in areas where they already had overseas qualifications and experience (eg teaching) but found these not accepted here.

ii. why Access?

A few people queried the appropriateness of the Access course which they had entered through ignorance of direct entry (eg. to B.Ed). One woman who already had the offer of a place at another Polytechnic also applied to PNL and was referred to Access.

6.6 New Knowledge

In examining their reasons for coming onto an Access course some interviewees identified subject areas like psychology which they had not been able to explore at school and now wished to study.

Most people in fact valued the experience and preparation the Access course gave them even when they discovered they did not formally require it.

However, some people who felt that they had gained much from their Access year, were nevertheless angry that it had been necessary.

> **"This affected my attitude on the Access course. I saw it as an opportunity, but I later resented it. Why should I have to do it?" (Social Worker/Lecturer 1982)**

VII FAILURE OR WITHDRAWAL: NINE CASE STUDIES

7.1 Unmet Expectations

> **"The experience of being 'wrong' is educationally as important as the experience of being 'right'."**
> **(Bannister & Fransella Inquiring Mind p.96)**

Amongst the group of ex-students who were interviewed were a very small number (nine) who had failed or withdrawn from their course. Since they present the clearest examples of expectations not being met and thus important general lessons for future Access provision their experiences are recorded in depth in the following case studies. However, it is hard to find any common circumstances or characteristics which proved significant and it is thus difficult to draw general conclusions from their painful and, often moving, experiences.

7.2 Failure

Of the nine, four did not view their official failure on the courses as evidence of their own incapacity. Conversely two, who withdrew voluntarily and had performed well on their courses, were much more uncertain about themselves. It appears therefore that institutional and personal perceptions of failure do not always match. The two women who had withdrawn had not fulfilled their own personal aspirations and in this sense felt as though they had failed. In this, they resemble another interviewee, described in the section on Employment, who had obtained a degree but could not get work in the area she had wanted. She thus felt she had failed.

The ambivalence created by withdrawing from a course rather than failing was illustrated by those who left for family reasons.

7.3 Early Withdrawal: family pressures

Helen

Helen had withdrawn from the B.Ed degree. She had joined the course at the same time as deciding to divorce her husband. In a 'disastrous marriage' she had been the wage-earner while her husband studied. Thus she had been forced to work while her children were very small and she had not ceased to grieve for the early contact she and her children had missed.

She had joined the course because she loved children and

> **"to get out of what I'd been doing - there was no satisfaction. Partly to prove to him I wasn't stupid...I was trying to make a new life for me...I could see ahead to the time when it would be just me."**

She had gained courage from the group of students,

> **"whose experience of life gave me insight into my problems. Some had been on the dole, had family problems, money problems, had been through life."**

The Access course had been healing for her.

> **"I really loved the Access course from the first. I made friends - I had been isolated. I was nervous and lacked courage."**

When she had been under enormous pressure at home during conflict over custody of the children, she frequently missed or was late for the Polytechnic class.

> **"In May I hadn't been attending college. I knew I hadn't done the work, but I passed the exams. I had gone to pieces. I felt inadequate. Basically I felt I had got away with it if I passed. It was almost as though I hadn't been found out."**

That last year had been traumatic.

> **"In lectures it was murder trying to keep awake."**

She had never considered the possibility of help with personal difficulties from tutors. Tutor support she construed as being possible only in the academic realm, even though she saw her academic difficulties as brought on by personal pressures.

> **"There was nothing they could do...My tutor was helpful on a placement visit when the class played up, but I felt stressed and inadequate."**

When she finally succumbed she felt -

> **"I had let her (tutor) down...my confidence is still not very good because of being isolated at home."**

She was thus confused: she recognised the enormous strength she had gained from her college course which had

> **"given me the courage to get out of a marriage that had been going wrong for ten years."**

and yet she felt inadequate and guilty at failing to complete the course.

Nevertheless she could recognise that the children were "all right now" and she was beginning to recognise that there might be opportunities for her. She had had "unfinished business" other than her education.

Marion

Marion was another ex-B.Ed student. A late developer, she had left school without being allowed to stay on for public examinations. She had

> **"liked CELC. It was a surprise to be treated as an equal, not like at school. The Access course had given me a lot of experience other than maths."**

She had left the course when her baby was born and the Polytechnic creche had not had a place available. She

> **"felt bitter that the college couldn't offer me a place at the nursery. I was put back four weeks by the late birth."**

and was suffering the after-effects of the birth and the exhaustion of caring for a young baby. She had thus decided to stay at home and have a second baby. She had the support of her B.Ed tutor to return to the degree but, being at home with young children and dependent on her husband's salary, for her

> **"Life changed completely."**

and she had become ambivalent about herself.

> **"Sometimes I find my college notes and think 'did I write this?' Now I very rarely write a letter to anyone, let alone an essay."**

On the other hand,

> **"Reading my files gives me confidence and having seen my sister move from one field to another I'm sure I'll do something."**

For she was obviously an organised, energetic and creative person. She was an active member of her housing co-operative and a parent governor at her son's nursery school. Her frustration was expressed aggressively

> **"I have painted the house three times and dug the garden over."**

and sadly

> **"I expect you'll put me down as one of the failures."**

Elvira

Elvira was another student who had withdrawn for family reasons, from Science this time. In some respects she felt her Access preparation for the HE course inadequate.

> **"The content of Maths was more like Japanese after Maths at Kingsway. Logic changed its rules every week and I found that hard to keep up with. Home problems combined to make it difficult to keep up. I was moving towards (leaving at that point)."**

Because she was affected by serious disturbance at home, and had been anxious to keep her private life separate from the course work, she had been offended by the patronage of teachers on the FE course who had,

> **"treated us as though we were fifteen over lateness and so on...I was living on supplementary benefit and without money. I had many problems. I did quite a lot of work at home after my daughter was asleep, until eleven. Then she'd have asthma until four. I got up at six. I was existing on two hours sleep a night. I didn't have time to think about work or problems. I just got on with it. I enjoyed pressure. I was offended by their comments, which were not made offensively or intentionally, on my sleeplessness because I was doing the Access course in spite of things."**

Her strategy had not been sufficient to enable her to survive the PNL course "in spite of things". Finally the needs of her child had become so urgent that she had been forced to let go and return to her old job teaching handicapped children. Here it was expectations of herself rather than of the Polytechnic which had proved unrealistic. She had in fact found both tutor and counsellors at the Polytechnic very helpful. She had approved of the fact that the

> **"tutors at PNL had little personal communication. It should have been more like this on the Access course,"**

where for her it had been a mistake to have the course tutor as a personal tutor. She had received no support divorced from academic work, since she had not found the FE counsellor sympathetic to her childcare problem (which was a question of arranging for paternal access).

> **"He didn't really hear what I was saying...I needed someone to listen, but also, and I still do, need practical help."**

Unlike students on other courses she had not been able to take advantage of the supports provided by a peer group since,

> **"only two of us entered the Poly. One was on another course, HND, and we became separated."**

For her, failure on the course was almost an irrelevance to the huge breakdown she was experiencing in her personal life. She was, however, still attempting to survive as an individual by maintaining a separation between her own learning development and her family troubles. In proposing to take up another course, albeit a much less demanding part-time one, her expectations were that she could still find "something for myself" in education.

7.4 Early Withdrawal: failing the course

Frankie

Frankie had been on the Law degree. She had failed her first year exams twice and was (at the time of interview) studying Law 'A' level part-time. Thus she was testing her own hypothesis that "there was something missing" from her Access preparation which could be solved by an 'A' level course. She hinted that she was seeking a more formal and structured approach which would prepare her for the rigours of a law degree.

Frankie had found the Polytechnic course beyond reproach and the tutors very supportive. As the only member of her Access course to survive the first year of the degree course she had no support group to draw on.

> **"It was all a competition thing there. Some people formed groups and worked together. Access students could form groups where needed but I ended as the only Access student in my year. I was the only one to take the year."**

It had also been difficult for a black working-class woman in a department where she had found the other students were "very middle-class' and many were from legal families. The only point of identity she had discovered was with her tutor who was "also a single parent".

It is perhaps significant that Frankie did not seem to have developed an internal assessment of her own progress.

> **"I didn't expect to fail, of course not. I didn't know how bad I was. I don't assess myself. I don't teach myself. Others teach me. My course work grades had all been fair, between C and B, similar to other students...I was a nervous exam sitter..."**

and

> **"However mature a student you are you need to be brought down by the teacher. A person is not harmed by being told by a well-meaning lecturer "you are doing this wrong".**

An additional complication for Frankie was that the course changed between her first and second year at the Polytechnic, so that the second time round she had

> **"gambled on this and learned a new law subject, tort, when I should have stayed with the old system."**

In attempting to understand her failure Frankie had thought only of her mistaken choices. She was not considering herself as a learner rather than as one being taught. Dependency on tutors, in fact, may have been the source of Frankie's problem.

Bella

Bella had come onto the B.Ed course via part-time Access. She had worked nights on her Access year and was determined to become a sociology teacher since she felt her background experiences in Jamaica were of particular value. At the end of her second year she failed her sociology. She had excellent reports for her teaching practice and was convinced she had the potential to be a good teacher even though,

> **"It would have been from the white point of view."**

and perhaps this was the source of the problem in her eyes.

Bella objected to playing the academic 'game' and felt

> **"I was kicked out because I ruffled the feathers of the lecturers."**

She felt this had been personal and she was deeply hurt.

> **"I would like to know why I was treated the way I was. The course has made me bloody bitter. Really really really truly bitter about the way the course ended..."**

On top of her failure Bella was hurt at the way it happened. She had been the subject of consideration by external examiners who

> **"voted me out. I didn't get support from the tutor or anyone ....I expected the staff to close ranks, it's the norm."**

The way in which she had been informed had also been distressing.

> **"I was told I had been failed by letter. External examiners had decided that I wouldn't make a good sociology teacher."**

Bella's perception of the Department was that it was racist and that Access students were stigmatised because they were black. The perception of stigma associated with Access made relationships with tutors suspect.

"Whenever you asked for help some reference was made to your being Access, not having reached the standard."

There was also a mismatch of Access and HE teaching method which caused confusion. On the Access course she had, like others, been advised to discuss an essay with the tutor who set it before embarking on it. Consequently, she had felt stigmatised when she had asked for help with an essay which she had taken to her tutor.

"All he did was re-phrase the question. When I demurred he asked me if I wanted him to do the essay for me and told me not to bring him a first draft because he would have to read the same essay twice."

She couldn't approach her personal tutor because,

"the role of the personal tutor wasn't clear to us. I don't think he could have helped. The guidelines I needed were how to narrow down the material - there was a heck of a long booklist - and be shown where to find sources."

After her experience at PNL she successfully completed an Extra-mural Diploma in Sociology and at the time of interview she was on a Social Science degree which she had joined in year three.

"I got two credits at London University the following year - the same person who couldn't pass exams at the Poly."

but ominously

"I say very little, have no problem with essays. I'm very, very cautious not to get involved in discussions."

She said that what she had gained from the course was

"insight into schools here. I know now you say what people want you to say, you endorse what they say rather than express your own opinion...I think other opinions should be

respected. I was brought up to support opinions with reasons and change opinions when the reasons are not adequate. I don't trust lecturers any more - not sociology lecturers any way."

For Bella her experience at the Polytechnic was very painful: both financially, since she had left a job to join the course, and, more significantly, emotionally:-

"I'll never stop re-living it. It cuts really deep."

Gary

Gary was repeating failed essays at the time of interview and hoping to return to his DSW course. He was critical of the preparation he had received on his Access course: he would have liked more on essay writing in particular and a more realistic preparation for the demands of his HE course in general. However his attitude to both the Access and DSW courses was highly critical and he accused both of stigmatising Access students. Further

"..the whole system is wrong. The academic structures are all about patronage from a white perspective. CCETSW needs to address itself to where it stands on race. Black people in the main have no experience of social work and a lot of the theories come from white middle class values."

He felt there was a conspiracy to trip up students.

"There are a lot of trick questions in the academic game."

His hostility had been aroused early. He felt that in his life he had suffered from

"adultism as well as racism. Kids are undervalued"

When his class was addressed by a physics teacher, "Listen you little monkeys" he had stopped going to the physics class. He had endured

physical abuse from his father and was always fighting. He felt angry most of the time and confronted opposition. In spite of being told that he had potential, he dropped out of an A Level class after three months. He had worked for the civil service but it had "messed me around". He was tuned in to being rejected, meeting traps or just plain boredom.

Gary had enjoyed the placement element of his course in contrast with the theoretical, Poly-based side.

> **"I had knowledge and giving advice was good for my self-esteem."**

though

> **"I didn't have much confidence in the written side of the course, I knew I could do the job."**

He had suffered major personal difficulties while on the course, and had internalised course subject matter which had implications for his self-image.

> **"I did a psychology essay on 'The Psychological Effects of Loss' I identified with it. I had moved flat. I knew no one. I was isolated, depressed. I had gone through the anger, self-blame stage - which peters out when you realise who the anger is with. I was more prone to illnesses. I lost about two stones. I had no appetite and insomnia. I didn't go to a doctor - because I was withdrawn and living so far away. I like to think I can work things out for myself."**

He had not trusted his tutor sufficiently to confide in him or ask for help. He had however received support from his study skills tutor and from his peer group of former Access students. Now he was

> **"learning from the mistakes I've made...the secret of success is the way you handle failure."**

Since the interview Gary has passed his essays and is back on his course.

Karl

Karl, a highly articulate man with an inquiring outlook, had quit his Business Studies degree in the second year. He had joined the Access course via a preparatory course run by Project Fullemploy, a community employment project. He had been successful at arithmetic and writing. He found

> **"the course enjoyable and that helped improve confidence about my worth".**

He was able to perceive the Access course and its effect on him in a fairly objective way.

> **"The course was still at an experimental stage. There was some conflict of interest among the lecturers and this was not good for my attitude - like school. I felt the (communications) lecturer might have wanted to be somewhere else. Perhaps I was looking for an excuse, but the attitude in her switched me off. Looking at it now, I assumed that this was an educated person and, looking at her, education didn't do much for her attitude. It started to disillusion me. She was the only one who was really bad. The others were all right."**

His view of himself at that time revealed that the passage of time since leaving school had not changed him too much.

> **"I gained the feeling that I was actually capable. Some forecast that I would do quite well and this led to confidence - perhaps I was over-confident. Perhaps I didn't work as hard as I should. I didn't try to impress with my talents. I didn't do enough. I was very preoccupied with things outside college. I attended regularly, but I didn't take extra work home...I wanted to feel I was living at the same time as going through college. I didn't find the right balance. It tipped towards what I was doing outside college."**

Karl had not known what to expect from HE and had not been prepared for the lack of immediate pressure, assessment and feedback. He

attended all his lectures but had not had sufficient time to go over things he didn't understand in seminars.

> **"Sometimes when I didn't understand he'd be sliding along and I'd just be taking notes on something I didn't understand."**

Karl mixed well with other students but 'workwise' got help from his ex-Access course peers. The difficulty over approaching staff was partly caused by their lack of time but also because

> **"there was a slight feeling with the staff. I could sense it. No-one said anything...they didn't treat the students differently. There was an element of me not being sure of myself."**

In fact Karl had had a very good relationship with his tutor and felt the Polytechnic could not have helped him more than it did.

> **"The tutor was quite good. He was difficult because his conversation was above everyone else. (His style was very monotonous). But we made a relationship. He saw me as a special case and wanted me to get through. He was very frank and a nice person. He would make time to see me if I had any problems. He projected what happened, because I didn't do enough work."**

He had benefited in a variety of ways from his experience on his courses. He had indeed been deeply interested in much of the subject content.

He recognised that the Access course was about promoting confidence, but also felt that it was necessary to provide background knowledge to make the Access student feel as confident as the one with A levels. A factor which militated against confidence for the student from Access was the constant comparison with the A level student.

> **"Talk about Access revolves around the notion of parity. Being on the first course, especially, we were surrounded with doubts. At the Polytechnic, A level students did have the**

advantage over me (in economics and quantitative methods), although they hadn't much. It was the thought that they might rather than anything else."

He suggested that there was a sense of stigma about coming to the Polytechnic from an Access course.

"Access students might need more preparation, but the whole 'Access thing' should go on entry to the Polytechnic. Me, personally, it doesn't make any odds to, but Access students need to go there and feel just the same as everybody else."

He recognised that confidence development was a critical aim of Access and one which he supported.

"I gained confidence in the feeling that I wasn't less of a person because of not having education."

Marjorie

Marjorie was a strong student on her Access year until temporarily disabled by a road accident. She progressed to the Polytechnic to study social work but was still receiving treatment as a result of the accident. This and a court case in connection with the incident had both affected her work.

She had failed three final assessment essays and passed only two at a second attempt. At appeal she was offered the chance to repeat the whole course or resubmit her essay again together with another essay. She finally decided to do neither. Financial constraints clearly played an important part in her decision since she would have been handicapped by having to work full-time while writing her essays. However she also felt

"to win another appeal would have led to working extra hard, because your work is going to be scrutinised...I would have had to go through getting supporting statements, argue my case and so on."

She did not see the Polytechnic as sympathetic.

> **"I don't think the accident was taken into account at the Poly, in spite of information being passed on from the Access course. They only found the information when I confronted them. My tutor only found the notes at the time of the appeal. I was disgusted with this, but it was no surprise to me because it was typical of people who have power."**

Like Bella she felt her failure was unfair and resented the impersonal way in which she had been informed of it. Both failed to understand why something as devastating for them as failing the course should be treated so coolly by the institution. They missed the personal discussion with tutors which might have made it explicable to them.

> **"I didn't get the information about passing two and failing one essay from staff, but from other students. I was the last person to know. It was left in the pigeonhole, although they knew I was working at home, not in college. Supportive students ring you and say, 'Guess what! You've passed two and they've failed you in one'."**

The comments on the essay on which she had failed seemed 'trivial' and though she resisted the temptation to accuse the Polytechnic of racism she had felt

> **"those people definitely want me off the course."**

However her story had a positive ending: she had a job which fulfilled her expectations and ambitions, she had successfully completed promotion courses and was paid as much as a qualified social worker. She could now say that she had benefited in many ways from her studies at PNL - although she did feel that

> **"my application form and interview gave me the job, not the PNL experience."**

She had passed two 'A' levels at evening class and was enrolled on a

part-time degree. After that she planned to take a one year CQSW. To sum up:

> **"I'm ending on a fairy-tale note, I've got a job, a car and I've just bought this place."**

Martin

For Martin failing at his Business Studies degree meant devastating personal failure. At school he had been a dreamer, who hated the school system, where he felt,

> **"trapped in the classroom, always in the lower streams"**

Unemployed after leaving school, he suffered from depression. He attempted to seek out his roots.

> **"I went to Barbados for six weeks. It was my island, my heritage, but when you got there, you felt more English. You were not accepted as anything else. I felt out of things - I couldn't even play an instrument to join a jazz band."**

He read deeply and seriously - D.H.Lawrence, Tolstoy, Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte and books on black nationalism. This reinforced his loneliness. He was

> **"freaked out, depressed and with delusions of grandeur. I couldn't express anything to anybody."**

He joined his Access course via Project Fullemploy and from the moment he entered the pre-Access course, life changed for him. He became the star of the class. He felt sure he could do

> **"five years study. I would get all my exams sometime. What I expected to get from this was...to learn a lot. I was going to prove to myself and others that I could do it. I'd read a lot. I had a lot of things going through my head and I wanted to get them down on paper."**

At first his predictions were more than verified.

> **"In three months I learned nearly the whole O level maths syllabus. I started from the beginning and filled up the gaps. For the first time I did everything they told me to. I gave everything in. My tutor praised me for some of my work...I started so well. My grades were good all the way. My first success was coming onto the Access course - and learning something."**

But he felt uneasy at,

> **"going from a bad student to a good student....I was gaining confidence in work and other students saw me like this but I'm not so sure that this was me. I was marking maths for the teacher when I had failed at school and college!",**

and he still didn't feel part of things in spite of having

> **"made friends with some girls - I was on a high at first. But my views on being black were different from the others... Racism is such an intense subject and my being mixed and not from Hackney made me different."**

He excelled at maths, but was unhappy about his English. He was uncertain about the feedback he was getting from tutors.

> **"I didn't know when I did well....My tutor praised me for some of my work, but didn't focus on grammar - which was the most important for me. I couldn't really judge my work."**

Lack of feedback was to be a major difficulty at the Polytechnic, as was insufficient preparation for HE teaching methods.

> **"There was no assessed work, so I didn't know how I was doing. I got lazy because there was nothing to give in...I just went to lectures and took notes and went into the exam not knowing what was expected. We had little tests and homework in maths...In tutorials we didn't know what to talk about. We**

didn't express how we felt because we were all enjoying ourselves...There was plenty of work to do, but no essays. No one would miss you if you turned up to lectures late...My first impression was that what I learned at City I lost at the Poly because there was no structure. What we learned was what was learned at City which was repeated at the Poly, but otherwise we couldn't learn new stuff."

Martin got good grades and passed his first year exams. He had no re-takes like the others and entered the second year where,

"the pressure was on because the grades in the second year go towards the final exam. In practical computers I passed, but I wanted to do well so I changed my way of doing things. At the end of the first semester I failed three out of the four exams, but I had felt that I had done all right. I went home in shock, shakes and tears....The second semester, I passed the first exam, but failed the others. I had lost confidence. I had gone into the exams with a new technique.... I tried understanding concepts, trying harder in order to get higher grades. I had read up beforehand, but not prepared (answers) as in the first year. Failing statistics was the worst."

He repeated the year, but

it was a new, changed course....It was punishing, because this was it, this was my last chance. I was fairly tense. Everything in the rest of my life had been going all right. I had had a good relationship. The relationship went to pot because of pressures of the work. I still struggled through. My grades were O.K....I felt alienated from the other students. I felt completely isolated. I went to pieces under the severe pressure. I started seeing the counsellor. It helped. The counsellor changed and I hated the new woman. She was no use to me. I was managing assignments and getting good grades. I said 'I am completely and utterly sad'. She wrote me a letter, but I never used it because I knew I was going to fail the exams.

After Christmas I was worse. (Before that) there were computer practicals and heavy course work - I managed to give it all

in...I stayed up nights to do the presentation and then felt I'd cracked up. I got grade C but spent a miserable Christmas because I felt I'd lost all my words...In February there were more exams. I got back a piece of work done before Christmas with grade D. and "Your English lets you down." I'd thought I'd done really well. I was so low and still had assignments to complete. When I sat down to work I couldn't write. I had a word block. I couldn't express myself. I just felt confusion because, this was it, my last chance, life or death for me. I couldn't imagine life for me afterwards."

For a moment he rallied as his thoughts turned outwards,

"I thought 'There's something wrong with the system. Exams as well as assignments. I found I didn't care one jot about Business Studies and the complexities of it. This isn't me. There is life afterwards.'"

But this mood didn't last. He had grant problems and at home things were not going well. His tutor was very helpful, but he was unable to get professional help for his state of anxiety.

"I suffer from smiling depression and when I went to the doctor I got no help. I do get depressed and I was desperate for help....The standard of work was complicated for me because I was complicated....I wanted meaning. I was on pills to keep you awake all night. I took them all through exams and a couple of weeks before. I couldn't write anything."

After the exams,

"I went into college and walked into the library almost breaking up in tears. I didn't go back. I still don't know the results. Even English O level which I was doing to put things right - I couldn't put anything down on paper. I couldn't concentrate...The decision to give up was a bad one."

At time of interview, he had pulled himself out of the depths and was

beginning to look about him again for 'something with structure', but he was still

> **"worried about going back to study....being back at school. The experience of working well kept me going through Access. At the Poly I was back at school again. I'm still in mourning, but I'm getting over it."**

His parting comment was,

> **"my football trainer said, 'If you get to University or Poly, you have to be a real, real wally not to finish.' I never went back to football."**

7.4 Lessons to be Learned

Snyder suggests that students arrive with questions and with needs, cognitive and emotional, and if these are not recognised they lead to conflict

> **"between staff and students, leading to perilous consequences for students, faculty, university - for society." (Hidden Curriculum p.28).**

For all interviewees, there has been a complexity of factors which they have had to cope with. Many of these are apparently external to their courses. In fact they are inextricably interlinked. If these people are to overcome the hurdles before them it will make their path infinitely smoother if the hidden curriculum is considered by those who plan courses. That is, if the institution wishes to take full advantage of the potential of mature students.

Kelly argued that

> **"you are not the victim of your autobiography though you may enslave yourself by adhering to an unalterable view of what it means. Thereby you may fixate your present." (Bannister & Fransella: Inquiring Man)**

Some of these students had looked inwardly at themselves for the source of their difficulties on the course when analysing the causes for failure. Others blamed external factors. Either way their perceptions of events led them to change their predictions and act accordingly. For three of them the effect of perceiving the system as having failed them led them to act aggressively to test out the hypothesis that they each had the capacity to take a degree by doing a different course in another college.

For a fourth the same view, that factors outside himself were at fault, seemed to have contributed to his failure in the first place. Only when he started to re-construe himself as having the power to change events did he start to take control and pass.

For Martin, too many events were stacked in opposition. Coming from a mixed-race background and entering a group which did not share his outlook he was vulnerable to feelings of isolation. Like Karl he entered the first year of a new course which had not yet found its feet. Like Frankie, he repeated a year with a different peer group and attempted ill-advised strategies for dealing with the new subject matter. Like many others he was unfamiliar with the rules of the game of HE. Even his attempts to confront his depression were countered by unfortunately meeting with individuals who did not perceive the extent of his distress or need: his Access Communications tutor, the Polytechnic counsellor, his G.P. Perhaps considering his search for meaning, more important would have been for him to have received initial careers guidance to channel him in another direction.

For Martin his new-found confidence had been too fragile a thread to sustain him when he first re-met failure. He was instantly projected back into the previous self which he had been taught to construe as hopeless. His past fixated the present for him. From then on his efforts to succeed were motivated by panic.

Can one speculate how differently he might have performed had he entered a later, more developed Business Studies Access course incorporating the changes he has suggested or had he been involved

with a different degree course altogether? He was developing glimmerings of self-realisation as a result of the co-counselling he had experienced and working with small children who had been healing for him. Given time it is possible that he will stop being the victim of his autobiography.

7.5 Polytechnic Policy and Staff Expectations

It is one of the principles of second-chance education to remedy deficiencies left by the school system. It is a philosophy subscribed to by the Polytechnic as a whole and there are many individuals within the institution who wholeheartedly support it. However, not everybody in contact with students realises the extent to which people's sense of self-worth becomes involved in their educational experience. Nor is it always clear to all what motivations and expectations are present in the students. A glimpse of some staff views indicates that some perceive these people through an inverted academic spyglass. The question of staff expectations is a thorny one. Many tutors welcome Access students. They welcome their fresh approach, their mature judgement, their motivation, their commitment to hard work. For some tutors, on the contrary, there is concern that these students might dilute standards. Or, if not, there is no real understanding of where people are coming from. Their own constructs of the desirable characteristics in successful students lead them to perceive these students as lacking from the start. They do not see what the students have to bring. Kelly's theory postulates that

> **"all facts are subject - are wholly subject - to alternative constructions" (Kelly 1970 qu. in Bannister & Fransella).**

and he argues that

> **"'Intelligence' is a dimension which we have invented and in terms of which we can construe others. It is not a thing which must be taken into account. Entirely different constructions can be used which do not involve such a dimension at all." (Bannister and Fransella. op.cit.)**

Not only students, but staff can be in danger of being fixated by their autobiographies.

Furthermore

> **"To the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another, he or she may play a role in a social process involving the other person ...(i.e.) interpersonal interaction is in terms of each person's understanding of the other...Conversely, if we cannot understand other people, that is we cannot construe their construction, then we may do things to them but we cannot relate to them."**
> **(Bannister and Fransella. op. cit. p28.)**

Since students also 'construe the construction processes' of others, their being seen in negative terms by even a few of their teachers is destructive of confidence and, consequently, self- fulfilling.

VIII EXPERIENCES OF COURSES - ISSUES

8.1 Personal Experience and the Hidden Curriculum

A psychologist, posing as a schizophrenic patient in an American mental hospital, wrote notes on his perceptions of ward treatment. He observed that a nurse, writing notes on him, had written, "The patient engages in writing behaviour" and never questioned him about what or why he was writing.(On Being Sane in Insane Places: Rosenhan. Science, Vol 179)

When students take their examinations and qualify, what the outside world sees is a pass list, a manifesto of success, the results of "engaging in writing behaviour". What the people who have graduated have experienced is glossed over. Even when there is a thin line between passing and failing which is generally acknowledged, -

> **"I thought I'd never make it at some points because of the workload and family crises,"(Teacher 1986)**

- the final qualification blankets the whole range of personal change, cameraderie, discovery, delight and suffering which people have undergone during their education.

Whether students have failed or passed their final examination they have been learning all the time at the Polytechnic and what they have learned has not necessarily been what was expected by them or anticipated by course providers.

Of the people interviewed in this study nearly all had succeeded in institutional terms: they had not failed their courses. Some had merits or distinctions on qualifying. Some had passed by the skin of their teeth, and a very few had 'failed'. All expressed observations about the FE college and the Polytechnic and many made recommendations for change.

It was clear from those who had withdrawn early that the interplay of

personal and course events leading to early leaving had been a complex affair. Similarly, for those who had qualified, complicated factors were at work. There was, however, concensus about the importance of several things: appropriate Access preparation; the anxiety surrounding essay writing; relationship with tutors and, above all, peer group support. There was too a fairly general assumption amongst the successful students that they had reached the end of the course in spite of a number of adverse circumstances: lack of finance; reduced time with family; and, often, loss of friends or partners from before Access when these were unable to tolerate or keep pace with the new person who was developing as a result of assimilating and accommodating new ideas. Although most expressed enjoyment of their educational experience and only one said that he actively regretted starting, nobody suggested that it had been pain free and, in many cases, where homes had broken down, there had been considerable loss.

References to personal hardship or disaster come over for the most part as throwaway lines,

> **"in my second year, just after my husband had left home." (Teacher 1987)**
>
> **"I moved from that address when I broke up with my husband (of one year's standing). He couldn't understand why I had to study in the evenings." (Social Worker 1985)**
>
> **"It'll take me another two years to get on my feet. The debts have piled up while I was on the course." (Teacher 1986)**

8.2 Finance

i. grants and financial hardship

Grants for the Access year are discretionary. The Diploma in Social Work course at the Polytechnic also attracts a discretionary, rather than a mandatory, award. Grants have only been assured for ILEA residents on full-time courses. Some other local authorities do provide financial

support, but these have varied from year to year according to financial priorities.

Except for those few people who were seconded onto the social work course by their employing authorities or had partners with sufficient income to support them (very few were in this position), entering training meant a hand-to-mouth existence for a considerable time. Many people worked part-time to supplement their grants. Those people without local authority finance for the Access year either worked long hours at night and at weekends or borrowed heavily. A few entered Teaching Studies via the part-time Access course and were in employment at the same time. Most of the successful ones interviewed made light of their financial difficulties later.

However, this teacher (an extreme example) demonstrates the commitment people have been prepared to give to this second chance of education. He described how he and his wife, also an Access student, together with their young daughter, managed to get through the Access year leading to teacher training. Both had left grammar school after O levels after the birth of their child. He worked in a bank, did labouring and other jobs. Both had wanted to be teachers and, at first, thought they would get a full grant to do A levels. They moved to London from the country town where they had been living and the wife, by then 21, got a place on the Access course. "Initially," he said,

> **"I was earning and doing voluntary youth work, adventure playgrounds, etc. but halfway through Anne's course I got the sack. I had always planned to do it (teacher training) so I took the opportunity. Anne didn't get a grant (we were not eligible for support from ILEA or Essex) so we lived off £1,000 in charity grants, the three of us. The fees were waived. The next year we lived off Anne's grant and the £1,000 charity allowance. We were both supportive of each other."(Teacher 1986)**

After that experience two mandatory grants for the duration of the teacher training represented a substantial rise in living standards for the family.

On the other hand, another teacher who had the financial commitments that mature people with families have, said

> **"living on a grant was impossible. I am still paying for it. I did the part-time course and a part-time job. I applied everywhere for finance for the Access year without success." (Teacher 1984)**

She had not stayed to take the fourth (Honours) year of the degree through a combination of financial pressure and poor health which prevented her doing part-time work.

ii. extra expenditure on the course.

Sometimes hard pressed students had encountered unanticipated expenditure because of course requirements. A Business Studies student explained that although theoretically she should have been provided for financially while on her industrial placement, the different hours and longer travelling distance meant that she had to spend more on childcare for her son and she was, in fact, out of pocket. Several others, teachers and social workers, commented on the fact that the needs of their children in financial terms were not sufficiently considered when placements were arranged.

iii. financial hardship and family sacrifice.

Many talked of the sacrifices their families had made for them and, especially where children had been involved, praised them for their help and toleration. They also demonstrated the careful planning that they had gone into before entering the course.

> **"I could have gone on studying part-time and taken A levels to enter for a degree but I didn't want to take four years out of my son's life." (Social worker 1983)**

In spite of careful planning and recognition of their children's involvement many parents still carried a sense of guilt and the need to make up for lost time even where they recognised that their education had produced benefits for their children.

The anxiety that working parents feel about leaving their children had been heightened for these ex-students, because they were asking their families to endure their being tied up day and night with study or work over an extended period, life reduced to bare necessities and an unknown outcome in terms of final qualification. Failure meant failing families as well as themselves. They clung to the compensations of deferred gratification, or of positive unexpected side effects. They hoped the compensations were not only the selfish ones of personal growth.

> **"I failed one essay. Then I felt really pressurised, because I couldn't afford to fail with my family. I got so much support from my five children (ranging in age from eighteen to eighteen months). My children have learned a lot from it as well. Through my course my daughter has become interested in studying psychology. At the moment she is doing A levels...The course has given the children the incentive to study. Two of them are very interested. If I am reading my son is very interested. He picks up my books and starts asking questions. He's thirteen. He never stops. I don't have the answers to all the questions. He watches serious programmes on television and discusses them and we spend hours trying to untangle different issues."(Social worker 1986)**

This strategy of working together with children was one used by most of the students with families.

8.3 Child Care

Many of the women who were interviewed were single parents and many others may have been but did not mention it.

Most had considered their children's needs very carefully and had well-thought-out support systems. When these crumbled, crises occured. For example there was a Social Work student with three children under seven whose marriage broke down during the Access year. Her mother helped her with child care but broke a leg in the first year of the Polytechnic course and was unable to continue. The student managed,

by make-shift arrangements, to get through the first year and a half, thanks to an understanding tutor and the knowledge that she was now a single parent and needed the qualification to support her children.

In general although the Access year had been recognised as particularly supportive in allowing a combination of domestic and academic responsibility, the Polytechnic's reaction to childcare had been mixed. There was anger at the lack of places in the creche which had forced one woman (How many others?) to leave her course and one to intermit. On the other hand occasional child care responsibilities were accepted in at least one department.

> **"A lot of students had to bring in children from time to time, but the Poly staff accepted small children crawling around" (Teacher 1986)**

As the strongest of motivating factors children were a frequent object of discussion both in relation to the course and to employment. Ironically they were often overlooked or problematic to the Polytechnic when arrangements were being made, for example, for placements.

8.4 Losing Relationships

Where families were actively engaged in the educational process students were able to see through the course with relative equanimity. Without this many struggled or withdrew; either from the course or more frequently from a relationship. Many former students had split with partners whilst on their course. Others split up afterwards when the strain of their new careers proved too much for the relationship. One woman commented on the way her personal development had created a rift with her wider family

> **"a definite rift between people. Now I have two identities, two languages. I've a split personality with family and school in order to hold onto the family." (Teacher 1985)**

She was painfully aware of her predicament.

"To be safe you have to cut off from everyone you knew before or only keep in touch with those that moved with you. I'm not really making new friends who are teachers. They're acquaintances. I want my cake and eat it. I love knowledge and all that's involved, but not all the trappings. I want to do a Ph.D. but I'm dead scared of losing my identity."

8.5 Social Life at College

The pressures of family responsibilities even where finance was not quite such a burning issue, combined with a sense of having no time to waste during a second chance at education prevented much involvement in wider college activities. A teacher whose husband was supporting her financially and emotionally described her feelings.

"As mature students we were there to do the work and not to muck around. We had to get on - this was the second chance and I had to get on to the end. Unlike younger students who could go off for a drink, I did feel a bit out of it, clubs and things, when I had to go home and cook the dinner."
(Teacher 1986)

Another teacher expressed a similar situation with less positive feelings. He had not been in the "O level band" at school and saw himself as a plodder who had "managed to hide" his problems with writing while on the Access course.

"I felt this was my last opportunity. It was perhaps not so urgent for others, but I felt very different from the others because of my age and a bit of uncertainty coming from my education. It was an ideal opportunity to do certain things such as canoeing and potholing but I would have felt a bit guilty about doing them.... felt as an Access student I should work a lot harder than the others...It was a personal thing. Other Access students did get involved. I had to get on with work."
(Teacher 1986)

8.6 Transition to Higher Education

i. preparedness

Transition to the Polytechnic was a testing time for confidence. The majority of people interviewed felt they had a distinct advantage over other mature, "direct entry" students.

> **"Access really prepares you for HE. When you've been out of college for a long time you've had it on entering HE (without some preparation). It was good to have learned about esays and taking notes". (Teacher 1984)**

> **"The fact that we were shown strategies for handling academic study gave us confidence. We touched on some of the subjects of the PNL course for example so they didn't come out of the blue". (Teacher 1986)**

During the Access year students had had links with the Polytechnic, which had been of great value.

> **"We were introduced to the Poly and were on familiar ground." (Social Worker 1986)**

> **"It was good to have use of the library at PNL during the Access year." (Teacher 1984)**

> **"Preparation for PNL was sufficient because we had gone once a week for tuition. We were familiar with the subject matter. I did my project on combined Physics and Chemistry within the Poly where I learned how to use the instruments and met some of the technicians before I got there." (Science graduate 1986)**

However some people's assessments of preparedness were more mixed particularly with regard to the amount of work required.

> **"Access did and didn't prepare you: for study, but not for the amount of work." (Teacher 1984)**

A minority were more taken aback at the level.

> **"Expectations around academic work were greater at the Poly. I couldn't imagine the level before I arrived." (Social Worker 1982)**

Ex-students from other courses felt less well prepared by their Access year. Those studying Science, Business and Law felt they had not covered certain areas of knowledge which they were assumed to possess. Several Business Studies students felt their course had concentrated on knowledge to the detriment of skills (a point since adopted by the Access course team).

ii. ethos

For many students, though, the big leap between the Access year and the Polytechnic was not restricted to academic preparation but to a fundamental change in ethos which centred around relationships between staff and students.

> **"There was no attempt to meet the needs of individual students and relate things to daily issues, on the HE course." (Social Worker 1981)**

> **"I was badly prepared for the Polytechnic because we were very closely and kindly cared for (on the Access course). It was a shock to be dropped into the Poly which was uncaring and unfriendly, except for some individuals who gave me some affectionate help..." (Humanities Student 1988)**

> **"The teachers were more helpful (on the Access course) than at PNL...they were less impersonal and a bit more friendly." (Teacher 1985)**

In part this was a question of scale.

> **"The environment was different at the Polytechnic, it was larger."(Social Worker 1984)**

but other factors were involved.

> **"There was a mystery about the Polytechnic being a big jump for us. Some of the lecturers were a bit patronising, grooming us with jokes - 'You won't be reading The Mirror or The Sun now will you?'. I felt as though I was being prepared to move into a middle class institution. In reality there was an element of truth in this."(Social Worker 1986)**

For some transistion was quite traumatic. Confidence acquired on the Access year deserted this student -

> **"Was I prepared for being at PNL? No, no, not at all. No God! I remember going into this large hall and I thought 'What have I done?'" (Social Worker 1986)**

The issue of transition to HE is one which is being generally discussed and reviewed. Pan Pantziarka in his paper "The step from further to higher education: a student view" (Journal of Access Studies, Vol 2, No 1) notes that the transition from Access to HE was traumatic for him. He suggests that the Access courses need to modify their approach particularly in the last term (a strategy being explored in two new Access courses running into PNL). His paper also contains the possibility of change in the practices of HE to make them more student-centred and this too is worth exploring. There is after all the possibility that suffering is not an essential component of education. Indeed it can be a pleasurable experience, as, in fact, it is for those who meet with repeated confirmation of their abilities and who are confident in their relationships with staff and other students. Transition is a difficult time particularly for students from non-traditional backgrounds. The students in this study demonstrate over and over the power of relationships to advance or delay their progress and this holds true for the next stage too, when they make the transition into work.

8.7 Confidence

i. to return to education

For many students the main constraint was their perception of themselves as being seen to be less than competent. Thirty eight people in this group of graduates laid major stress on the lack of assurance that led them to Access, occasionally when they possessed the attributes and experience necessary for direct entry as mature students. Their lack of self-confidence arose from experience of racism, particularly as children; from their isolation as women from the outside competitive world and because they were not able to assess themselves in academic terms. They lacked knowledge of the system and of the language needed for higher education.

Again and again statements such as the following cropped up in interviews:

> **"I had no confidence in my ability to learn and myself as a learner. But, on the Access course, it was lovely to have a dip into all the different subjects...It dove-tailed into the Polytechnic course at the end. I didn't need as much as I thought. I could do more than I realised."(Teacher 1985)**

> **"The course provided me with more confidence in myself. It made me talk to people who had outside interests as well as family. I found I had something to share with people, other than my children. I came here at eighteen. I had two children by twenty so I didn't make friends."(Teacher 1987)**

> **"The Access course was useful in terms of making contact with other black people. It got me back into study and gave me confidence to get back into writing."**
> **(Social Work Polytechnic lecturer)**

ii. non-Access mature student comparison.

In dour contrast an ex- mature student described her experience. Now an FE teacher who graduated with an upper second in sociology, she

described her entry to HE (not PNL). She had started at thirty after having left school with one O level at sixteen.

> **"My first day. I must have imagined it like school. I was surprised not to have a place to hang my coat like school. We had a half day introduction. Then I had to go into this big lecture and take notes. It was a horrific experience. I tried to take down everything he said.**
>
> **I was miserable. I didn't like the people. There was a whole combination of things. I couldn't write an essay. I now see what we had to do as basic, but then it seemed really hard. The people were young and middle-class. I used to get aggravated about what people had to say about working-class people. Little things let out what what people really felt. By the end of four years they were all right, but the first term was a nightmare. I cried every night.**
>
> **I persisted because my husband was encouraging. I thought everyone who went to college was clever. College was not the right place for me, therefore I was not clever. I was intimidated by the language and the references the whole group used. My husband helped me look up the words. He said, 'Listen to what they are saying and not how they say it and you'll realise it might be a load of rubbish.' I did and it was a load of rubbish. I said I didn't agree (with what one of them was saying) and from then on the whole group changed.**
>
> **"I got over the essay problem. Handouts from the lectures helped. I used them as essay plans. Without handouts I could have answered the essay questions in two lines. I passed all my essays with good marks. I had to read a load of books as well. I wasn't brought up to read. It's not a pleasure, it has to be study, I need to keep doing courses to get the discipline to read. I now read more. I force myself to start two a month. Some students didn't get through because they didn't have the discipline."**

She had not been entirely without preparation.

"The trade union was a good training ground. I had all my anxieties there. I never saw the tutors as absolute givers of knowledge. If they made mistakes I challenged them. This came from my trade union experience. I settled in after Christmas with the confidence of finding that other people were not necessarily as clever as me. The tutors were not very supportive. I would have liked to be told how to write essays not just a book on how to study. Nobody ever told me what was sociology."

"The subject helped me gain confidence because it clarified and confirmed things for me. Access students had the advantage, because it was an alien world for us."
(FE teacher, ex-mature student 1986)

iii. time to build confidence

For many people, although the Access year had done wonders in allowing them to perceive that they had more ability than they had previously been allowed to show, it took more than a year's confidence building to replace what they had learned from previous socialisation.

This social worker demonstrated how her confidence failed her on different occasions, depending on how she interpreted other people's view of her. She described how course content on the Access course helped her deal with one aspect of her shyness and how the right kind of support on placement in her second year gave her back lost confidence.

She had been trained and worked as a psychiatric nurse for seven years until her daughter was born and then transferred to office work for childcare reasons until her daughter was eleven. She then applied for direct entry to a CQSW course but was advised to re-apply the following year.

"I was disappointed because of my age. It was another year in my life...I was interviewed and offered the opportunity of Access. I accepted the place, in spite of feeling eligible for direct entry. I didn't think I needed it, but I never regretted

doing it. I learned a bit about myself and the course transformed me as a person. During nurse training I was always very quiet but I managed to get through. When I first started the Access course I was very shy, very retiring and not able to express myself in public. This is one of the areas worked on in the course because of book reviews. They were the turning point, because it was compulsory to stand up before the whole course for the book review. After a while I enjoyed it. At first I went into an anxiety state. The more I did it the less it worried me. By the end I couldn't stop talking and made a nuisance of myself."

In spite of this transformation her confidence was later knocked when it came to a practical work placement. On the placement she had a supervisor who gave her

"supervision for three days, two hours a time for the first week. I couldn't cope with this. I couldn't reach the supervisor to form the relationship for a whole term. She gave me no opportunity to use my initiative in spite of my considerable past experience."

"I was talked down to by the supervisor. She mouthed the words as though I'm deaf and nothing makes you feel worse than that. I told her 'Those twisted wires are the racism in you and unless you deal with it you will never get on with your black students. I felt as though I was the supervisor."

Her lack of confidence had been noted by the team and the team leader suggested she be released from her placement. She found another placement with a supervisor who,

"refused to read the placement report from the first supervisor...Angela (the supervisor) worked through the placement breakdown with me and helped me not be affected. In supervision she left finding out about me for a time. She afforded me a sense of responsibility which is what I needed. I had a lot of work allocated from duty... came out at the other end raring to go."

She had been offered employment in the office where she did this placement where they didn't normally keep students on. She was the first black worker they had had. She later moved to a specialist post in a psychiatric hospital.

iv. lost confidence.

Others remain with a sense of loss in spite of having graduated.

A white working class teacher who had been a strong element in her community had been full of self-assurance on approaching the Access course. In spite of this, she said that she had needed the Access course for confidence after bringing up her family, looking after her husband and running a business which had been an informal centre of support for local people. While doing all that she had been,

> **"in control, in charge. But to present oneself to someone else is something else. I was well prepared for the Poly. It was a good feeling to start again at the beginning at the Poly, but it seemed like a long stretch. We wondered how we would change during the four years. I regret some of the changes. I feel now that I miss out on communicating with other people. The one thing I had I seem to have lost. I feel alienated now from my own people, the people I set out to help. The confidence I had when I went to the Poly was stamped out because what we older students had wasn't valued - not by everybody."(Teacher 1987)**

Another teacher, the man already quoted, describes how his wife a year ahead of him had been expected to get a first class degree by her tutor. She got a 2.1.

> **"Nobody at college realised the devastating effect of not being given a First when (the Head of Dept.) had admitted that she had earned one. She needed that for her confidence. It came after a hellishly problematic year. She had had a discouraging working class clever but uneducated background, different from mine. My family was an encouraging (pleased but patronising) working class background."(Teacher 1986)**

It is clear that staff are not always able to judge the level of a person's confidence, but then neither are people themselves.

In the case of one of the students who failed to complete, confidence and the lack of it proved a crucial issue. This young man had shown enormous promise in his Access year. Despite himself he began to flourish and his confidence began to grow. He apparently had great promise and consistently did well - until his transition to the Polytechnic course when the apparent lack of structure, pressure and supervision left him unsure. Though he did not do too badly at first he had no clear idea of what was being expected of him, his confidence began to wobble and when he received bad marks his confidence failed him and he went into a downward spiral of panic and failure.

8.8 Encountering Prejudice

Comments about sexism and classism experienced while on the course arose occasionally, in relation to other issues. As an ex-Law student (1986) said

> **"race, sex and class are all hurdles".**

However, what was the most remarkable thing about these interviews was that the overwhelming majority of black students raised the subject of racism at a very early point in the discussion. No white student did so. Where it was raised by those in the latter group it was done tangentially and it was clear that their construct of the word was totally different from that of those who were black. It was evident that it is hard for a white person even to begin to understand the violence that racism does to the outlook of a black person who lives in a white-oriented society. This was revealed by the perceptions of racism during their college careers described by white ex- students compared with the perceptions of black interviewees.

Thirty seven social workers, twenty teachers, (including five white teachers), and one white Humanities student talked specifically about racism, as did all the black students who withdrew early.

What white interviewees said on the subject was emotionally quite pale, to say the least, compared with the strength of feeling of those on the receiving end of racism.

i. black perspective

By contrast, discussion of racial issues was widespread amongst the black students interviewed.

Certainly most black students commented on receiving either direct racial prejudice or institutional racism, usually both, during their growing up, on the Access courses and on the Polytechnic courses and, later, in work. It is not surprising that difficulties were seen as part of a conspiracy directed against black students.

> **"They tried to fail me out of spite."(Teacher)**

It clearly affected confidence and personal identity.

> **"Being a black woman you don't feel very open with other people. I wouldn't have opened up because of racism. You feel you are not very good, you're doomed to fail."**
> **(Social Worker 1986)**

Within course content there were frequent culture clashes around Eurocentric values which proved upsetting.

> **"A lot of what was said made me question home values. I had a few run-ins with my family over the way we had been brought up."**
> **(Adoption Social Worker 1983)**

One teacher who had been the only black student on her course felt isolated without a group of fellow students or black tutors. Again and again the people interviewed returned to the importance of the group for academic, social and personal support. They also referred to the occasional black tutor.

"There was one black tutor at the Polytechnic. He could be talked to, especially about racial things."

"It was good to see a black lecturer. She certainly was a great help to black and white students.

ii. non-access black graduates

The perception of racism was not confined to teachers and social workers from Access courses. The two black non-Access graduates, without any prompting, immediately started to speak about the racism they had encountered on entering Higher Education. They both had Nigerian parents, but the first was born in this country. This man, an ex-university student who had read Biology in a provincial university and is now undergoing post-graduate training said,

"they looked at me as a black person coming through and didn't expect a lot of me."(Science graduate 1988)

The students reactions had been,

'you're all right, but the others...' Around election time, people made comments about Bernie Grant and the Hounslow riots and so on. I never let it go, but I felt that people were thinking, 'There's Alan making waves again.' In London there are so many difficulties that you don't have to do much, other people do it for you. In my department there were four or five blacks out of a hundred and twenty students. The problems I met made me more black conscious. I still feel more black conscious."

The second man, now pursuing a Masters' degree, had graduated in Science at a Polytechnic outside London. His family had come to this country after his O levels and he had studied for A levels at a London Further Education college. He defined a racist as,

"A believer in the good-for-nothing black guy who cannot do anything. All black guys are under-achievers and there is no point in talking to them."

He said of his HE experience that he had been the

> **"only black guy in a class of sixty. Two guys, students, picked on whatever I said or did. In the first year whatever you said was always noted. It took a while for them to accept me. When I was the only guy with a distinction in chemistry they realised, 'This guy's brilliant' and we became friends. I visited them in their homes (both were from provincial towns with few black residents). They were not racist, they didn't know how to react to me. I was the first black guy they'd come in contact with. (Science graduate 1987)**

He had survived the system because he was exceptionally good academically, because he had had very supportive tutors and because he brought with him strong inner support derived from his Christian background and from his family.

He had recognised racism when he had been in the FE college.

> **"The careers tutor, who didn't teach me any subject, was a racist. He said, 'Don't even bother to apply for HE because you won't make the grades in medicine or organic chemistry'. In Nigeria you choose whatever you want to do. For O levels nobody tells you you can't do this or that. You pay for it so you choose what you want. No one is told whether to do CSE's or GCE's. I wished the careers teacher had said, 'I believe in you' to some of those doing A levels so although you have only got E's, you work a bit harder and you'll get A's.' For careers officers it seems that black guys end up in factories and the white guy in the office, so they don't even bother to push you if you're not doing well."**

iii. multiculturalism

For the teachers the issue of multi-culturalism affected their professional preparation. The black teachers interviewed felt this part of the course was insufficient for their future work.

"It didn't provide any answers or explain what was happening." (Teacher 1987)

"It should not have been an elective."(Teacher 1984)

"I hoped the multi-cultural thread would run through everything."(Teacher 1986)

"It shouldn't be separately hived off."(Teacher 1987)

Several commented that a valuable resource was not made use of.

"Our experience was not taken into account."(Teacher 1987)

One teacher recounted being moved to tears of anger by the waste.

By contrast three white former teaching studies students felt there had been sufficient concentration on multi-ethnic education.

"For multi-ethnic studies we had a week of different speakers...it was pretty well balanced." (Personnel Coordinator 1984)

iv. race awareness teaching.

Both Social Workers and teachers had experienced race awareness sessions which formed part of the programmes of study at the Polytechnic in more recent years. The absence of such courses was commented on by those from earlier Access years. Students from other faculties did not mention them. Most interviewees talked of them with mixed feelings.

"People had strong feelings in relation to their prejudices and put these across quite strongly....the effect on us was important because automatically as a black person one is more sensitive to them."(Social Worker 1982)

and

> **"The lessons were really something else. They used to be a battlefield, not lessons, because of the different views which led to huge arguments. A lot of people learned a lot from each other arising out of what was happening in school."**
> **(Teacher 1984)**

Many interviewees had been, and still were, upset by the experience and many were critical of the way in which the issues were handled by white staff.

> **"The majority of the staff were white and possibly they didn't push for change because they didn't think it important enough, although half the course was black with a lifetime's experience."(Social Worker 1986)**

The final verdict was that,

> **"The whole nonsense of race awareness can be destructive. Tutors must therefore review the whole area of work for which they are responsible and make sure that race and gender issues are included."**
> **(Social Work Policy Adviser 1985)**

v. meeting racism at work.

A number of people had found the teaching on their courses an inadequate preparation for the racism they found at work. The majority however had sufficient experience and personal strength to overcome hurdles and diagnose situations. There was evidence that some of those interviewed were already bringing about changes at work.

> **"We're starting a black workers support group."**
> **(Social Worker 1986)**

and

> **"I'm making development links with black projects in the community...I'm on the Community Health Council as a black**

mental health worker and I'm about to start a research project with the consultant looking at follow-up treatment and comparing the proportion of black and white who receive this."(Psychiatric Social Worker 1983)

vi. stigma of Access

For some time there has been a debate in educational circles as to whether it is a stigma to enter HE via Access. The views of ex-students vary. Thirty five social workers, twenty two teachers, one Humanities student, one ex - Law student and two from Business Studies all talked about the subject. This time there was less difference between white and black perspectives.

"We were treated the same as the other students." (White Teacher 1984)

"It never occurred to me. It was a huge privilege." (White Humanities Student 1987)

"It was quite an advantage." (White Teacher 1987)

Others saw things differently

"Some tutors didn't differentiate, but some discriminated against Access."(White Teacher 1985)

"'Students without A levels shouldn't be allowed into PNL'came from about four lecturers...sometimes formally, sometimes casually." (White Teacher 1985)

Where white students perceived stigma they were all agreed that it was very subtle and that they were able to withstand it. They had not found the staff attitude shared by fellow students or colleagues on teaching practice.

Black students often found it hard to disentangle racism and stigma attached to Access. For this Business Studies student there was no confusion

"We were treated differently because we were Access students, not because we were black."

For others the two were inter-related.

"The Access course was seen as inferior because there were only blacks on the Access course." (Senior Social Worker 1983)

Yet others perceived no differentiation.

"I would have liked a bit of positive discrimination, but I didn't experience any negative discrimination." (Ex-Law student 1986)

Sometimes even such well-intentioned attempts were perceived as stigma

"The Head of Department invited people from the Access course to go along to extra English. If he said anyone else I didn't hear." (Social Worker 1982)

vii. the Patrick Harrington affair.

Race issues were by no means matters of perception or over sensitivity on the part of students. Many of the people interviewed had been at the Polytechnic during the crisis caused by the activities of a National Front member and organiser, Patrick Harrington. The crises which resulted from his membership of the student body, subsequent student demonstrations and ensuing disputes between management and lecturers ended in the High Court and seriously rocked the whole institution. Nearly everyone in the Polytechnic was affected in some way but many of those interviewed recounted how deeply affected they and their work had been. For many, the Polytechnic's inability to expel Harrington, was perceived as racism and this in turn was felt as personally upsetting and threatening.

viii. "mistaken scholarship".

Other former students had been involved in a series of less public but equally distressing incidents around plagiarism. The issue began, ironically, in the security which students found within their peer group of Access students in the apparently hostile world of the Polytechnic.

> **"We sat together because we felt under attack. I felt more secure with people I'd known before. At first there was sharing of work - this became less - finding books, discussing and so on..."**

Sharing work led to problems because students were accused of copying. After investigations by their Head of Department it was agreed that no plagiarism had been committed. The students had been guilty of nothing worse than 'mistaken scholarship'.

The issue refused to die. Two years later when a few black students failed an essay the whole Access group was implicated. Successful essays were re-marked.

> **"Lots of areas were very grave for us. For example, going over essays again and failing essays that had already been passed. I've got papers to show this. A number of black people were said to have been failing. Therefore they re-examined past papers. Lots of things were happening down there. Plagiarism was an issue."(Probation Officer 1986)**

One teacher recounted how ignorance of the correct way to construct a bibliography led to a review of an essay by the Exam Board. Even when the issue was resolved by the Board

> **"the tutor didn't accept my story. I was summoned again to the Board of Examiners. The Head of Department and another tutor were present. I had my rough version luckily. They eventually believed me and gave me A -. The tutor told other students that some people pay for essays to be written for them. He said 'How can people who can't write English come to write excellent essays?" I didn't confront him because I was still within his power." (Teacher 1987)**

ix. coping with practice placements

Where these had formed part of the HE or Access course (Access to DSW) people commented on the degree of interest they had received from tutors and placement supervisors. In the main experiences of placement were not affected because students had come into education via Access. One significant exception to this however was where black students experienced racism on placement and felt isolated away from a protective college group.

One man described an experience of institutionalised racism in a professional setting for which he was unprepared. He was the only black worker although half the children (in a residential unit) were black.

> **"Adults discussed race with the children around. Children can't challenge without being in a very difficult position. I learned how to challenge, if not at the time, but later. I was not properly armed to deal with it."**
>
> **When he left, the unit had employed two black workers; positive images of black role models like Martin Luther King and Gandhi had replaced pictures of third world people toiling, working or suffering..."they had asked me what the priorities should be."**
> **(Social Worker 1986)**

Other people had had less positive outcomes from their placement, they had felt under pressure to prove themselves by doing better than a white counterpart: they had met apparent hostility and mistrust and they had not always found the support they needed from their tutors.

> **"Maybe a group with a tutor who is sympathetic could help.There was no one there to help us cope with racism. We needed a black tutor who was very skilled and very well trained, but not one who is going to feel 'I've come through, why can't you?', because that's worse."**
> **(Social Worker 1986)**

7.9 Significant Relationships

i. relationships with tutors

Most people recognised the value of adult relationships formed during the Access year on a basis of equality, which could then offer support.

> **"The Access course was like home at the end of the day...we were never turned away. We felt as though we belonged and that's a very nice feeling."(Social Worker 1986)**

> **"The important thing was talking to tutors, breaking down barriers. I hated school, I hated teachers. You could actually talk to these as individuals. I was able to return to a tutor for advice about an essay."(Social Worker 1978)**

> **"They were very good teachers, pushing you and saying 'You can do it, try harder!'" (Teacher 1986)**

A few people found that the relationship fostered over- dependence.

> **"We were talked down to by a number of tutors.....we fell into a parent/child relationship because we were treated as children. I felt that the tutors were doing us a favour and so we became goody-goodies because we wanted to get onto the Poly course and be successful."(Social Worker 1983)**

Others would have welcomed a more directive approach

> **"I needed stricter criticism though"(Social Worker 1983)**

and some needed time to adapt to a new environment

> **"What I gained from the course came too late....as relationships developed I was able to ask for help and got it. I was not able to use them for the academic side of things, but to help develop self-knowledge."(Social Worker 1986 - on the Access year)**

"The tutors were very supportive but not necessarily approached because I didn't always know what I needed." (Teacher 1987 - on the Access year)

At the Polytechnic things were different. Some people had found support.

"I liked the Polytechnic Law Department. The lecturers were very supportive -more than Access."(ex-Law student 1986)

"I was assigned a tutor but I never found out who mine was. I made a relationship with one of the tutors and took my problems to him. He was very supportive." (Business Studies student 1988)

"As for tutorial support, the lecturers were not always available, but they were good when they were there...one particular lecturer was very helpful because she was concerned about me and helping me."(Teacher 1987)

For others there seemed no hope of a receptive hearing.

"The tutor was strict so you couldn't approach him." (Science graduate 1987)

"We got no support from tutors. One tutor was never to be found. We went knocking on his door and never got him." (Teacher 1984)

Some had felt unwilling to approach staff and had waited for the initiative to come from teachers. As Access students they were particularly keen not to be labelled as needy.

"As an Access student you don't want to be seen as struggling...I failed an exam and had to do a re-sit. I nearly fell to pieces. The staff didn't notice I think."(Teacher 1987)

At the Polytechnic there was also the issue of power which affected the tutorial relationship.

"I was suspicious of tutorials. I was not sure what would be done with the information for my assessment.The Access course was not the real thing and therefore not threatening." (Social Worker 1983)

The same person realised only later what the purpose of a tutorial was.

"I now see that it was offering the student space and time to look at work and personal development and how people were feeling about the course. I didn't quite understand the one-to-one process."

ii. support from the group

The most valued outcome of Access appears to be the group of people who have shared a common experience before entering the Polytechnic. Ex-students from all courses talked about how they retained contact with other members throughout their HE course and beyond. The group offered casual and social support but also functioned as a study group.

"When we went to PNL we met stigma which originated from the staff. We clung to the college group for support throughout, both for coursework and for private matters - family breakups, for quite a lot."(Social Worker 1979)

"We prop each other. She was strong in organisational theory. I helped her with maths. I didn't feel I needed the tutor so much....only when nobody knew what was going on we went to the tutor...one of us went in first and if we still didn't understand somebody else went in and asked. Sometimes the group as a whole went in."(Business Studies student 1988)

At the Polytechnic students were encouraged to use the group which was not always mono-ethnic but contained people from a range of backgrounds.

"We were encouraged by the Polytechnic to work in groups. Problems could be taken to tutors. If there was no joy there,

we went to our work group. It was strong enough to cope." (Teacher 1985)

"There was a variety of backgrounds which led to a variety of ideas which was interesting. Some were mixed race, some white, some Afro-Caribbean."(Teacher 1986)

The group was a powerful force

"the group made me feel more confident to speak on certain issues."(Teacher 1986)

and provided opportunities for learning

"working in groups you were forced to speak."(Ibid).

Where students were the only Access entrants on their course they missed the group support. Of the students who failed nearly all were the sole Access student on a course or were in a minority of two. Though working in groups had led other students to view the Access cohort as cliquey or even racist, on balance the advantages were seen to heavily outweigh such disadvantage.

IX GAINS

9.1 Advantages of Access

Whatever people have suffered and whatever criticisms have been made the list of advantages that they cite is huge. It ranges from details about subject content to gaining the strength to be independent in personal life (cf. Helen above).

Only one person interviewed stressed the acquiring of a professional qualification as the most important outcome. Nobody talked about having got a better job as a result (it perhaps went without saying), although several had suggested this as the reason for entering the Access course in the first place.

Confidence gained while on the course and the support given by the group which has led to much longer term advantages have been stressed by everybody as the comments above show.

Below are listed other ways in which people have profited from their Access and HE experiences.

9.2 Opportunity

"It has given me a chance in life I would not otherwise have had. As black, mature students we have very few avenues for us in this society."(Social Worker 1986)

"For people like me there was no other way. The O.U. is the only other possibility, but you do it in your own time and you have to pay for it."(Teacher 1987)

"It was great because there is so much untapped talent in the working class. People who desperately need to change their lives. Access should be made available to other groups to make education more widespread, so as not to leave talent to

waste. Working class children are failed by the system. The odds are stacked against them."(Teacher 1985)

9.3 Return to Study

Twenty seven people talked about the importance of being given "a stepping stone", into the academic discipline needed for advanced study.

> **"It was good in providing me with the organisational framework of discipline. It reorientated me to study." (Education Welfare Officer 1978)**

> **"I really needed the course to get back into the swing of things."(Teacher 1987)**

> **"Now was my opportunity to pick up the pieces." (Teacher 1986)**

> **"It helps you to get yourself together and put you on course. Otherwise you go in unsure."(Teacher 1987)**

9.4 De-mystifying Education

This was one of the elements which enabled people to advance. Realisation that ordinary people, 'like me', get degrees or that it was possible to retain working class allegiances (not too many people said this) was important.

> **" Degrees and CQSWs were meant for the superhuman. The mystique around FE was put into perspective. The myths were dispelled and education became real and concrete and within my grasp. Knowledge was possible for me. People actually stop themselves going after the unattainable." (Social Work Training Officer 1984)**

9.5. Personal Growth

This was a topic that permeated discussions. Social workers talked about it particularly in relation to the benefits they gained from the Sensitivity Group on the Access course which was set up especially to develop self-awareness.

> **"Access was a gradual rejuvenation."(Teacher 1987)**

> **"I've learned to look at life differently and be more positive. I've found that life is not just sitting back and taking what people give you but standing up and fighting."**
> **(Social Worker 1986)**

> **"The experience of being in an all-black group enabled me to become a moving spirit (in creating a support group for black workers)."(Social Worker 1986)**

> **"I gained a vocation in life."(Teacher 1986)**

For the following man diagnosed as dyslexic while on the Access course it had taken time to come to terms with a new view of himself.

> **"I entered the Access course not knowing what to expect. I left in a similar state. It was like a shock. I had a block over academic work. Self-assessment blew me. Beginning the second year at PNL I began to understand the value of self-assessment. My tutor encouraged me and gave me attention when I needed it. She gave me room to come to her. Sometimes she imposed herself when it was needed which was beneficial to me. I got support from the language support class teacher. I was assessed by the ILEA Learning Support Service and used the class for two years."(Social Worker 1986)**

Although he still resisted the assessment of himself as dyslexic he found that,

> **"my reading is much better and I can admit now that I hid my**

spelling in bad handwriting, but I've found out that spelling is not so important in Social Work!. I've learned that you can develop unless you concentrate on one problem so much that it blocks you."

Like the teacher who had "managed to camouflage" his literacy problems ("the thing that prevented me from doing things at school") throughout the Access year, this man raises the question of earlier diagnosis for people with spelling difficulties and the need for continued support throughout HE.

9.6 Reading

"I never read much before college. I read a lot now. It was very helpful, I've learned not to take everything I read as gospel. I have an open mind. There are always two sides to everything." (Social Worker 1986)

9.7 Knowledge of Subject Matter and Study Skills

Essay writing and Maths were the subjects which both gave people the greatest trouble and also the greatest pleasure. A number of other areas of the courses were mentioned as important.

I really enjoyed Maths on the Access course. I wish I'd specialised in Maths. It was good to return to Maths as an adult. It made sense. At school, I did it because I knew how, I didn't know why." (Teacher 1986)

"I learned how to study." (Teacher 1984)

"On the Access course I learned how to write essays. I learned how to take notes."(Teacher 1984)

"Third World Studies were not so popular, but suddenly started to fall into place because we realised we were learning about ourselves and then we were able to identify with the

lectures. This led to my collecting a library of Third World books. I was eager to learn more after seeing it as irrelevant to start with. He (the lecturer) was good because he persevered."(Social Worker 1986)

"The Psychology that we did on Access was useful and presenting material to the class was good training. So was the essay writing. It brushed up our skills."(Teacher 1987)

"The course is not only for those who need writing skills: you need a lot more than that. Not only study skills are needed for this work. I learned planning, meeting deadlines, how to get on with colleagues, to work as a team and, most of all, to listen. The course was pressurised, but this was useful, because pressure really started on the Poly course. On the two-year course we were advised to use tape-recorders to fill in gaps, but note taking was important. Access students had less problem than others. Some didn't know anything about note-taking in lectures. People on the two-year course often didn't cope as well as Access students at the beginning. I sort of nursed one particular girl through the first few weeks. We were well prepared."(Social Worker 1986)

9.8 Comparison with other entry routes

"I wouldn't have been better off with A levels. I certainly wouldn't have been a better teacher."(Teacher 1986)

"With choice I would do the Access course rather than A levels. We used to go round to each other's houses and let each other tear essays to bits. We wrote our essays about four times. This is where the Access course really helped - in structuring essays and so on. People with A levels still had problems with structuring essays for quite a while. Only one of the direct entry students got a 2.1. There were about nine from Access and only one who got a third. (Teacher 1986)

9.9. Discovering Learning

Next to confidence what these mature people spoke about most was their delight in study and learning for its own sake. Their main aim for coming back into education - to overcome their earlier educational disadvantages and to regain themselves - had been achieved.

"I love knowledge and all that's involved."(Teacher 1985)

"I enjoyed it. I sailed through it with no problems. I enjoyed studying. I had hated school. The fact that it was for me - I knew I couldn't fail."(Teacher 1986)

"I really enjoyed being a student. That was suprising after my negative experience of school."(Social worker 1983)

"Mostly time flew by. I enjoyed what I was doing but sometimes felt I was drowning. I was kept afloat by interest in the subject matter. The BEd doesn't qualify you for any other job, but I felt the course was an education rather than training." (Teacher 1985)

"I enjoyed most classes." (Social Worker 1986)

"Secondary-based education was really wonderful and I don't regret the subject specialism to the level that we did it." (Teacher 1985)

"I enjoyed studying when I was tuned in to it and that's what the Access course did."(Teacher 1987)

"Everybody needs black literature in a multi-racial society. I did a three month course in Afro-Caribbean literature at the Institute with Kwesi Owusu. I was the only white on the course. It stands me in good stead. I wanted to do it. I was interested in it.I have a thirst for knowledge." (Teacher 1987)

"I enjoy study very much. I get a buzz from finding things out and putting things together. There was a lot of time for

research on the Access course. I can't think of anything else the course could have done only give me another year. I felt sad at leaving. I felt panic -'I don't know enough' - but looking back, not really. A course can never give you everything. I don't prefer work. I like studying. I like work, but the more you do, the more there is to know. I've developed training skills. I find the creative side terribly stimulating. I chaired a press conference for the first time last year. You feel terrifically nervous, but you do it and then there's something else you've learned. There are terrific opportunities in adoption and fostering. I'd like to write a paper for foster parents for the NFCA. I'll have to use my own time."(Social Worker 1985)

These were not the only people whose enthusiasm for learning had not stopped on leaving the course. The long list of courses undertaken by people on entering work (Appendix Tables 6 & 7, certificates how much people have been motivated to go on with 'finding out'. Indeed for many, as has already been intimated, the real learning started only after receiving the qualification which was the sign to the outside world that people are competent, not the 'thickies' that they have felt others to have perceived over so many years. For many the course had freed them to go on and explore their limits.

"When people keep telling you you're a failure in society and then you realise your potential then nothing's going to keep me back." (Social Services Policy Adviser 1985)

"Part of the reason for the next course (Advanced Social Worker Training) is to get hold of some of the things which were available in 1982 and benefit from them as I was not able to benefit from them then. I wasn't mature enough at the time." (Social Worker/FE tutor 1982)

9.10 Other Gains

In addition to the gains discussed above a whole host of other advantages were put forward.

i. for teachers.

Meeting other people outside their own course
PE
English Literature
English Language
Visits to Schools in the Access Year
Experience of different schools for teaching practice
Repeating some subject matter, in greater depth, already done in Access year
A good grounding in teaching theory
Gaining knowledge of what to expect on the teaching course
A gentle introduction to the Polytechnic
Sociology
How the education system works
Learned how to argue
Improved political awareness
Improved concentration
Extended creativity

ii. for social workers.

Knowledge of social work from placements
Law lectures at PNL
Improved political awareness
Developing independence
More reading
Gaining authority
Working as a team
Learning to analyse situations
Learning to understand people
Professionalism
Appreciated bringing in practitioners
Meeting different and conflicting viewpoints.

X FINAL VERDICTS

10.1 Mixed Feelings.

A few people qualified their evaluations. Of the eighty six interviewed four people would have preferred an Access course which provided an alternative choice of HE course, in addition to the link with PNL. Some people expressed how negative experiences could be seen as gains.

> **'I've learned the way not to treat parents at school or 'It's given me an idea of how to treat other people....I'm more sensitive towards my students'.**

For others their judgement was mixed.

> **"I've learned a lot from the course, but it was mainly confidence-building, developing my professionalism.I lacked advice, and academic and practical support."**
> **(Social Worker 1986)**

> **"The Access course was really really good. At the Poly the course was too complex for the short space of time. There was too much theory and not enough listening to the students. I was interested in getting essays done in my own time rather than using the seminars. One-to-one tuition, then private research would have been best. Theory - there was a lot to comprehend. Things from the Access course are still a part of me and I can remember them. I can't remember much from the Poly. On the Access there was more illustration. I could be prepared more to listen. In the smaller group we shared ideas and questioned far more. This should be for all students, not just for Access. At times I was nervous to ask questions (at the Poly). There should be more emphasis on confidence-building." (Social Worker 1986)**

10.2 A Success.

The vast majority of those interviewed said

> **"It's been worthwhile and great fun." (Social Worker 1979)**
>
> **"I didn't regret it. Three good years. It was a marvellous experience, even if I hadn't got through (but I was determined to do it). I got a lot of understanding."(Social Worker 1986)**
>
> **"In the ethnic study group (at work) there were comments that Access makes black people a problem. To get rid of Access you'd have to turn the whole education system upside down. I feel I've benefited. I wouldn't knock it. Access should continue until such time as the education system is turned upside down." (Social Worker 1983)**
>
> **"I haven't regretted it one bit." (Teacher 1984)**
>
> **"The Access course was great. It prepared you well for the Poly. It gave you a good grounding in all areas. I could have done with full-time, rather than part-time but I took what they offered." (Teacher 1987)**
>
> **"The entire course was a learning experience for me." (Social Worker 1986)**

Chapter XI: STUDENT OVERVIEW

11.1 Survival Strategies

For those who completed the course by far the most frequent strategy for survival was forming a work group of peers, nearly always from the Access group.

Getting support from home, usually in the form of encouragement and often from their children, was very important. Where this was not forthcoming there was frequently marriage or relationship breakdown. Living up to family expectations was also a strong motivating force to make people confront difficulties.

College Support, ie. using the help of tutors and counsellors, was not cited by many as the resource they found most useful and from quite a few there was strong criticism of some tutors whom they saw as either uncaring, unable or positively destructive.

Native Wit. On the whole the reaction of people in this group was to meet setbacks by working harder. They also 'admitted' to using their wits in ways they thought not sanctioned by the system, eg. using books not recommended by the course, not reading the whole of a book, using the format of lecture handouts to structure their essays!

Finally - the need for personal growth was so powerful a motivating force that it kept people going whatever the obstacles.

11.2 What made People Suffer?

i. the institution

The size of the institution and its impersonality were frequently mentioned and here it would seem that the first contact was vital.

ii. the work

The volume and occasionally the difficulty of the work were mentioned as problems, as were feelings of not being sufficiently prepared academically - this was particularly mentioned by science, business studies and law students who met assumptions that they had knowledge where in fact there were gaps. Lack of prompt and regular feedback from tutors on work done.

iii. the environment

Many people described a sense of being in an alien environment where they had no right to be or didn't belong. There is no question that being brought up in a working class home, black or white and experiencing classism and racism is a conditioning that is not wiped out by a year's Access course.

iv. undeserving

An interesting response from many was the sensation of having in some way been fraudulent if they had done well. Again and again people used expressions, like, "When I passed I felt that I had got away with it",; "I didn't really believe it when I got a 2.1, I thought there must be something wrong with the others."

v. low expectations from staff

Many reported tutors with a low expectation of Access students which was expressed either explicitly or, more often, implicitly. These students felt that they had to work harder and get better results than other students, because they expected differential marking of their work. Far from being 'dependent' students, many kept a low profile and didn't expect to take work to their tutors. They had usually not received the help they'd wanted in the form they'd wanted when they had initially approached a tutor. Some perceived their tutors as being under too much pressure to be able to cope with students.

vi. lack of involving student's life experience

It was clear also that not all tutors acknowledged or valued the life experiences of these students as having anything to offer to their present learning. Those who did are remembered with trust and affection.

vii. confidence

Sometimes, but this was frequently overcome after a short time, people reported being paralysed by the impact of other students who appeared confident and clever, who used long words and who referred to unheard of books. Extended contact teaches Access students that they are just as able as others and sometimes their life experience gives them the advantage.

viii. racism and classism

Most black ex-students reported racism. Few white students were concerned with it.

Frequently the subject matter taught did not reflect the experience of the students. They reported Eurocentric psychology and sociology, in particular, as presenting views which challenged the values they had derived from upbringing in a different culture. Theories expressed about the working class conflicted with personal knowledge gained from being part of it. The black experience was mainly ignored or given token acknowledgement. Racism awareness or anti-racism courses, although seen as important, were strongly criticised for their inadequacy and, often for their wrong approach.

ix. stigma

Ex-students, both black and white, referred to the stigma associated with coming from Access, in spite of their personal sense of having benefited from it.

x. academic power

The knowledge that the HE department is where the power lay was another crippling factor. The assessment system was not just measuring academic achievement for these ex-Access students. Their sense of self-worth was at stake, far more painfully it appeared than for 'standard entry' students because, for many, the course was viewed as a final attempt to test out whether they really were as incapable as their schooling had dubbed them. Such conditioning had created an ambivalence about their own belief in themselves which was often belied by an outwardly forthright manner. They were concerned not to 'let the side down'. In addition, many had given up jobs to do the course and felt that it was far too much to have asked their families to have sacrificed three, four or five years of earning if they were not to graduate.

xi. having to prove oneself.

A number of students described how they put their heads down to work for that qualification, ignoring everything else the institution had to offer: social and sporting life; political involvement; interest in students from other courses, etc. They said, at the end of the course,

> **"Learning is starting now. I couldn't learn before. I was too busy getting through."**

Perhaps this is a cause of so many enrolling for other courses after graduation. As one student said,

> **"The degree in psychology after the CQSW was just for me. I wasn't trying to prove anything."**

Clearly, some of what the majority of these Access students experienced was similar to what all students go through, perhaps to a lesser degree. Certainly they showed much in common with other mature students of similar backgrounds. Compared with the latter however they appeared to be at an advantage in terms of survival.

In general this was achieved through pure determination and, often, a sense that there was no going back. Few said that it wasn't worth it. Only four of those interviewed (two from BEd, one from Applied Social Studies and one from Science) said that they wished that they hadn't done the course.

Similarily voluntary withdrawals were often for the most pressing domestic/health reasons.

11.3 Changes and Recommendations Advocated by the Students

These focussed on issues of transition and in particular:-

i. links

It is necessary for the Polytechnic staff to be familiar with the skills and knowledge areas covered on the Access year and therefore have realistic expectations of the students on entry to HE. Similarly, it was felt important that links between the two courses be maintained and strengthened and that visits to the Polytechnic take place throughout the Access year.

ii. clear definitions

From many people too came a plea for terms and practices to be clearly spelt out: not only 'what is sociology?', but 'what is a seminar, a tutorial?' etc. Understanding clearly what shared work entails might eliminate the accidence of 'mistaken scholarship', for example.

iii. specific discipline

Recommendations to the Access courses were predicated upon HE remaining unchanged. There was therefore a request for more emphasis on essay writing in general and for the discipline of specific writing skills (eg. for Law) in particular.

iv. development of personal autonomy.

Ex-students requested the development of personal autonomy on their Access year to overcome assumptions of 'needing extra help' at the Poly. How this is to be achieved requires careful joint planning. It probably does not from the evidence viewed here, suggest taking away supports, particularly during the Access year.

v. race issues.

People also felt they needed more space to consider issues of racism particularly for the vocational BEd & DSW, courses. There was a request for the 'right kind of anti-racist, multi-cultural education' which reflects the community in which all students live and in which many will be working and which makes use of what students themselves can offer. Linked to this was a request for tutors to be up-dated professionally.

On the whole however, the ex-students remembered the Access course as very supportive and helpful.

vi. induction.

Recommendations for the Polytechnic included a longer induction period in which to meet tutors, support services and to identify knowledge gaps;

vii. teaching and learning practice

On teaching and learning methods the ex-students were critical, they recommended the avoidance of lectures, more workshops and group based work; recognition of the experiences students bring to the course rather than a focus on deficiencies; more use of well-produced handouts; useful timing of feedback; more careful thought in the timing of assessments and a recognition of the importance of relationships in developing students' confidence and skills.

Ex-students recommended an initial continuation of study skills teaching and diagnosis and support of students with learning difficulties and second language requirements.

viii. family and finance issues.

There was a request for recognition of and support for students' family responsibilities especially childcare facilities and financial problems. In many ways these ex-students were speaking not only for Access students but for a far larger number of mature and non-traditional people coming into education. Any changes made in their name would benefit all these - and doubtless traditional A level entrants too.

XII: CONCLUSIONS: THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

In his paper, 'Achievement of Access and Non-Access students on a BEd. course', Michael Conolly asks the question,

> **"why are these students succeeding now, given their history of under-achievement?"**

He suggests that some possible reasons may include,

> **"Non-traditional bureaucratic structures, clear and attainable objectives and individualised learning activities. Most important of all is staff expectation of student qualities and abilities."(New Community Vol 12 No 1 Winter 84/85)**

The people interviewed in this study have borne out these propositions. They have responded well to the fresh approach of the Access courses. They have appreciated the small group work and individual tutorials of both Access and Polytechnic courses. They have wavered when processes and language have not been clear, when they have not known the rules either of the overt or of the hidden curriculum.

However, there appears more to it than that. Access students entering the same Polytechnic course objectively enter the same environment: institutional racism, class or sexist prejudice should be there for everybody to perceive. Obviously, the ex-students interviewed here did not all arrive at similar conclusions about their educational experiences.

There is no decisive evidence from those who failed as to which factors contributed to failure which did not also apply to those who suceeded, except, perhaps, in some cases, lack of a supporting peer group. Indeed, as was indicated by the case studies of those who withdrew from the Polytechnic, failing is a concept open to different constructions. There was certainly a sense of failure about three of those who had qualified while, at the same time, some of those who had left courses without graduating could not be said to have failed in any definitive sense.

It is at this point that Kelly's theory of personal constructs appears to provide the most satisfactory explanation. It is why too it has been thought necessary to provide an insight into the backgrounds of some of the people interviewed. Knowing what experiences have brought about people's constructions of the environment in which they have grown up can throw light on their reactions to later events. This is best illustrated by the different perceptions of racism, racism awareness teaching and multi-cultural education gained by black and by white interviewees. It can also explain how the service provided by staff who think of themselves as caring and hard-working (or stressed) or, alternatively, maintaining educational standards, can be seen as inadequate or hostile by students whose expectations of the system arise both from their poor experience of past schooling and, later, from the nurturing they have gained from Access courses.

Most important, what Michael Conolly's suggestions also leave out is what comes from the students themselves. No longer children, they have matured and developed life skills. A point that many have made in different ways is that there was an existence for them before further education and that they had gained experience and knowledge from the way that they had handled their lives, even though that knowledge had not been couched in academic terms. They gained a great deal from having that experience acknowledged by staff on the courses. Where it was not valued they felt diminished and less capable of giving their best.

Michael Conolly asked what makes these students succeed? Perhaps the answer lies largely in the kind of commitment shown in the following.

> **"I stayed at home to look after my daughter until she went to nursery school. In that three years I was making up my mind. I got baby sitting help from a friend. I wanted job satisfaction so I went to the AEI. I was worried about my writing. I went to Numeracy, Keep Fit, Dressmaking, English. I committed myself to self-improvement and focused time on my daughter.**

I took her to playgroups. My time was well organised really. I discussed with my tutors. They had different views of me from my writing. Some were more positive than others. I was not too happy about the negative view of me as too emotional, because I was trying to imagine how people felt, but writing helped me because it helped me to show it was all right to put what I felt on paper, but since I lacked confidence negative criticism put me back. If you can gain someone's attention it's very important and it's part of social work to listen to clients and work towards their needs. I'd made enquiries about courses and fixed on social work. I'd always been a religious person and I wanted to give service. I had a purpose in life. It made me persevere against odds. I always sought and accepted advice. That's how I got on the course.

I wanted to develop my writing skills, so as to make my reports more professional. The course could have been tougher and focused more on writing, especially essays, from the beginning. Practice makes perfect. At the Poly we were to be thrown right into the deep end. Therefore I needed more preparation, especially of grammar and different forms of report writing.

In work my reports are good, but there are still areas I would like to develop, especially my own style and ideas when assessing people, to be clear of my own feelings and accurate when on paper. It takes practice. If it takes me ten years to be good at something. I'll persevere. I'll learn, develop skills, be very clever so that I know what I'm talking about."
(Social Worker 1986)

When provided with an opening, "a step up", "a foot on the ladder", "a stepping stone" and not too discouraging an environment, the strengths of the "untapped talent" in the black and working class communities will do the rest.

X III DISCUSSION

13.1 National Changes

When the DSW and BEd. Access courses were conceived, the thinking behind them was twofold. On the one hand they were needed to supply a deficiency in the social and education services - there were not enough black social workers and teachers to implement the policies required by the philosophy of the time. On the other hand, they were seen as an educational opportunity by their initiators: the opportunity to discover the extent of hidden potential within a minority, disadvantaged community and how far it was possible to compensate for lack of school qualifications by a combined effort between HE and FE.

Later, the downturn in the numbers of eighteen-year-olds with A Level qualifications has caused concern about falling student rolls in HE and offers,

> **"an incentive to maintain student numbers by admitting those offering other qualifications and experience."**
> **(CNAA 1989)**

This possibly has led to a situation where not all staff teaching Access students have evolved a positive educational philosophy towards their presence in HE.

There has however grown a national recognition of the importance of Access, as is indicated by the 1989 CNAA paper, "Access Courses to Higher Education: A Framework of National Arrangements for Recognition". In this the objectives and main features of Access courses are viewed as:

a.) facilitating entry to higher education;

b.) providing mainly for mature students, being designed and taught to meet their needs;

c.) catering for those without conventional entry qualifications who do not yet feel ready for direct entry to higher education;

d.) meeting the needs of specific groups in the community, identified as under-represented in higher education, and thereby facilitating implementation of equal opportunities policies;

e.) providing a planned programme of studies, or an organised educational experience which is an alternative to the courses provided by other educational, vocational or professional examining authorities (GCE A levels or national qualifications).

An outline for formal accreditation of Access courses is set out in the CNAA paper. These are to move from a position of vulnerable marginality to an accepted place within the established education system. Now the task is to

> **"enable individual Access Courses to achieve a wider acceptability and 'currency' across the HE system as a whole;**
>
> **- to act as safeguard against any erosion of standards;**
>
> **- to provide a more generally understood and more uniform basic framework, and to maintain rigour without imposing rigidity, within which a diversity of provision called Access Courses may continue to flourish;**
>
> **- to act as a catalyst for innovation within HE institutions."**

13.2 Implications for the Polytechnic of North London

PNL as a whole has long recognised the importance of supporting Access and its current "Strategic Academic Plan" gives voice to this. In particular, its "Revised Mission Statement" makes a number of statements against which it is possible to weigh up the findings of this study of Access students and their perception of their experience.

High Quality

"Quality....is not necessarily measured by formal entry qualifications. For PNL, quality is reflected in the learning experiences of its students and the level of capability with which they emerge from their studies.The essential components for delivering quality courses are the professionalism of its staff and the commitment of students."

Access and Equal Opportunity

"Widening of educational opportunity will continue to be given the highest priority. PNL will increase the opportunities for mature students.....and for those without traditional entry qualifications."

"The provision of equal opportunity does not stop with the recruitment of staff and students but must also encompass teaching, learning and curriculum issues and the manner in which staff and students are treated inside the institution."

Employment

"Capabilities include intellectual and personal confidence, a spirit of enterprise and a range of literary, numeric, analytical, technological, interpersonal and innovative skills."

Cost-effectiveness

> **"Its major goals of high quality and wider educational opportunity will....have to be achieved at the lowest possible cost."**

Community

> **"It also places a high priority on its contribution to the regeneration of the inner city."**

13.3 Access Accomplishments in Relation to Polytechnic Mission Statement.

This research paper has been concerned with what has happened to Access students, students who entered the Polytechnic without formal entry qualifications. The Polytechnic's statement of faith has been substantiated by the outcomes for these people. There is no question of the validity of these in terms of academic quality and commitment - Michael Conolly's research demonstrates that these students emerge from their studies comparable to students who have entered HE by other routes - although a few take slightly longer to reach the goal.

The people in this study have found the employment for which they have trained. The number of promotions would suggest that they have the personal and professional skills required to be assets in their employment.

The list of other gains cited by these ex-students is evidence not only of what they have learned in formal terms, but also of their development as individuals with confidence in their own abilities. For the most part these students - initially, by definition - suffering from educational disadvantage, no longer perceived themselves as deficient even where they recognised there were still battles to be fought for acceptance in the world of work.

Furthermore, most now had a more realistic view of how to approach

those battles. Their commitment to further learning is perhaps a strong indicator that their courses have provided them with the toe- hold that they needed to pursue continuing development for their own good and for that of the community.

What they have already described in relation to developing interest in learning in their own children and in the understanding that they bring to multi-cultural teaching and social work must contribute to raising the morale of disadvantaged groups and thereby enhance the regeneration of the inner city.

It must be asked, however, whether the quality of their experiences within education has been good enough. The commitment that they have shown has had, in some cases, to fight a near-overwhelming battle against family pressures, lack of finance and the accumulation of educational disadvantage with its accompanying psychological effects. They have not always met the attitudes in staff to facilitate progress. Even when staff have been committed to the notion of Access, as have been most staff on the Access year, there have been serious mismatches of perception of what it means for mature people to re-enter a classroom. This was shown clearly in the 1982 project on social workers and there the staff were a team particularly enthusiastic about Access. When teachers start with no particular goodwill towards students the results can be painful and frustrating, even when students are together in a sustaining group. When isolated on a Higher Education course the outcome can be disastrous. The mature students interviewed here, not from Access, highlighted the advantages of Access preparation and the value of being with a group of similar background.

XIV A MISSION STATEMENT FOR ACCESS

Need for Access

While the needs of black, working class and women students are not met by schools, Access will continue to be required as an alternative to conventional entry. There is also some evidence from current Access students that there are other people within the community for whom Access is desirable, e.g. second language speakers. These should be identified and provided for in HE.

Failing to do this is a waste of the nation's resources, especially in relation to the employment market, as well as a frustration of human potential.

Entry

Admission requirements should be expressed in terms of competencies rather than certificates. Prior learning should be accredited. Selection should be jointly undertaken. These mature people who have families to support and who often relinquish paid employment to take up a course need the security of knowing that their places in HE are secure, provided that they complete Access satisfactorily.

Finance

The Rampton Report's recommendation for assured financial awards for people on Access courses should be implemented. The Polytechnic and colleges should press Government for mandatory grants. There must be a national recognition that for these students, above all, student loans will be a deterrent from contemplating entry. There are also large numbers of part-time Access students who are threatened by changes to the regulations in the Social Security Act 1989, which will make the continuation of their studies very difficult.

Childcare

If women are to be encouraged into HE, an understanding of family commitments needs to be built into the structure of all courses wherever possible. There needs to be more than the present derisory amount of creche provision. If resources are limited a new look at priorities might be required.

Curriculum

There should be a scrutiny of subject content to ensure that it reflects the experience of all groups within the institution. At all times opportunities should be sought to articulate the learning people are experiencing and to give rapid feedback to individuals, since students, and not only Access students, do not always know the value of their work.

The experience of students should be made use of in addition to the 'received words' of authorities - often the skills people already possess are not made visible, even to the students themselves. This should be included in the planning of teaching programmes. Where students are often in a better position than staff to understand the issues involved as, for example, in multi-cultural education, this expertise should be acknowledged and utilised.

Since Access students, though competent, are new to the academic game, care should be taken to explain differences of epistemology (how do sociology and psychology differ?) between different subjects and clarify procedures and terminology which though obvious to the habituee are gobbledygook to the novitiate. (What are 'concentrations,' ' seminars,' 'tutorials,' 'semesters,' ' modules,' etc.?)

Links

Links between colleges should be strengthened. Where possible, FE and HE staff should exchange teaching sessions. Opportunities to share facilities should be constantly explored so that students can gain confidence from familiarity with the environment which they are to enter.

The Group

Access courses need to focus on skills to enable students to form groups successfully as and when needed.

Students should, wherever possible, progress from FE with others so that they can develop the autonomy of mutual support. Erosion of fixed link courses should be a matter of concern. Where students enter a higher education course singly their possible vulnerability should be recognised and supported appropriately. In any case small group work is particularly advantageous to all mature students and should be encouraged, especially in HE.

Supports

Learning support, such as now provided in many colleges, needs to be extended into HE, not specifically for Access course students. These should be made available in each department, not just at the centre where they are often difficult to reach. Second language support and help for those with specific learning disabilities should be included. Tutorials, and how to make best use of them, should be available as fully as possible. Where tutorials work they are invaluable.

Where students withdraw from a course, if the institution is to take any responsibility for its students as people, it is important for tutors to follow them up, especially where course assessments have been failed. This should not be the sole responsibility of administrators and the Careers service. No one leaving a course before completion should do so without having been offered counselling and guidance opportunities.

Careers

Where possible the Careers service should be involved in selection for Access - this happens in the case of some FE college careers advisers already.

Autonomy

To develop independence Access students need to learn the skills to survive in HE. This includes learning to use the supports available. Staff should recognise that the demands on tutors made by these mature, adults do not necessarily mean that they are more 'dependent' than direct entry students. They tend to take a more questioning stance, gained from life-experience as consumers.

Attitudes and Management Responsibility

The CNAA document has suggested that Access should "act as a catalyst for innovation within the HE institutions". For many staff this is an exciting notion. Not necessarily so for others. The greatest difficulty in creating change is that of moving from one construct to a new one. Changing staff attitudes may not be a speedy process, but if the Polytechnic as a whole wishes to implement its avowed intentions it must work to bring about change, by facilitating staff development in all its departments which might entail, not just a concern with academic matters, but with fundamental personal relations. The moral attitude that students who request help with work are somehow inferior as people is one to be deplored.

Responsibility for institutional change should not rest with a few highly committed individuals - and even less with the mature students themselves - but with the highest policy-making and resource-allocating committees of the Polytechnic. It is they who must ensure that the philosophy and ethos indicated in policy statements is made real by their endeavours.

Linking some departmental resources directly to Access might be effective in persuading alterations in outlook, since attitudes often harden in times of financial cutback and innovation looks more difficult.

Progression

Progression to HE should not require a further entry test. Evidence of competence on the Access course should ensure admission to HE. Recent developments in Open College Accreditation should be valuable in this respect.

Assessment

Course and student monitoring should be regularly carried out jointly by both departments concerned, wherever possible.

It must also be recognised that some forms of assessment are less helpful to Access students than others. Since transition has been shown to be such a major hazard it is evident that assessments which start too soon after entry to HE create excessive anxiety and can lead to poor performance. Poor performance feeds on poor performance and a familiar chain of disadvantage appears. Examinations, too, always an emotional area, re-awaken old fears and represent more of a hurdle for these students than they do for those who have experienced past successes.

It has been recognised that, since Access students have uneven gaps in knowledge, the learning required for HE can often take longer than the Access year which starts off the process of catching up. Opportunities to delay assessment after the entry to HE and to repeat where necessary should be recognised as part of the Access process and not be seen as evidence of low ability.

Transition

This is a major hurdle and often sets back learning for this group. Attention should be given to induction which should be lengthened and made as comprehensive as possible.

Resources

The notion that the Strategic Academic Plan must be carried out with the 'lowest possible cost' militates against many of these recommendations. Some, however, might be processed by a re-ordering of priorities and a scrutiny of attitudes. It has to be faced that if mature students, including Access students, are to be a large element in HE then their needs should be considered. The line between success and withdrawal is for them a very fine one indeed. If further cuts, as the Strategic Academic Plan suggests, are in danger of "seriously affecting the quality of the service provided." then Access students, in spite of their almost superhuman determination to succeed, may well not survive.

Recommendation for Further Research

1. A comparative study of Access with other mature entrants.

2. An investigation of employers' views. How invisible are those who enter employment via Access?

3. Staff attitudes - how these might facilitate Access.

124

Bibliography

1. Bannister, D and Fransella, F : Inquiring Man, The Psychology of Personal Constructs. Penguin, 1980.

2. Benson R.Snyder: The Hidden Curriculum. MIT Press. 1971.

3. Bourner, T Mahmoud Hamed, Barnett, R. Reynolds, A. Students on CNAA's part-time first degree courses: summary report. CNAA Development Services Publication, 16. 1988

4. Bunnell, W A BEd Hons Progress Review 1982.

5. CNAA, Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals: Access Courses to Higher Education: A framework of national arrangements for recognition. 1989.

6. Conolly, M : New Community, Vol. 12. No 1. Winter 84/85.

7. Croome, D : John Menzies and Razam Gurnal: Equal opportunities and Captains of Industry: an Account of a Business Studies Access course. Annual Conf. Soc. for Research into HE. Imperial College London 18 Dec. 1984.

8. DES Letter R116/89/01 Aug 1978

9. DSW Steering Committee: Minutes of Oct 10 1975 (CELC)

10. DSW First course leaflet, 1975 (CELC)

11. Rampton: Interim Report on West Indian Children in our schools, HMSO 1981.

12. Future Trends in HE. HMSO.1979.

13. Higher Education into the 1990s: a discussion paper. HMSO.1988

14. HMI Report on the Soc. Sci. Faculty 1983

15. White paper: Better schools HMSO. Cmnd. 9469 March 1985 para 209.

16. Interim Report on the three-year project, Diploma in Social Work, including a Foundation Year of Study, 1978.(CELC)

17. Millins P.K.C. Access Studies to Higher Education: September 1979 - December 1983: A Report. London, Roehampton Institute (1984).

18. Ogbourn, J. BEd Hons Progress Review 1983.

19. Pantziarka Pan. The step from further to higher education: a student view. Journal Access Studies: Vol. 2. No.1. Sprint 1987

20. Detailed response to NAB recommendations to close initial teacher training at the PNL. 10th May. 1985.

21. The Director, P.N.L. Strategic Academic Plan submitted to Board of Governors, June 5 1989.

22. PNL Academic Development Plan 1982 - 1987

23. Report of a Working Party set up by Steering Committee to a Gateway to the BEd. course. 27 Feb 1978 (CELC)

24. Rosen, V Evaluation of the DSW Access Course. M.A. Thesis. Sussex University. 1982.

25. Rosen, V. MA Thesis, 'The Adaptation of Students on a Special Access Course to the Demands of an FE Institution'. University of Sussex, 1982

26. Swann Report: Education for all. 1985.

27. Teaching Social Work for a multi-racial society. CCETSW 1983.

28. TES June 2 1978.

XVII. APPENDICES

Tables

Table 1.

Chronological table showing development of Polytechnic of North London Access courses referred to in this report.

Course	Year of entry to Access Course	Year of first entry to PNL	Year of first qualifying exams
Access to Diploma in Social Work	1975	1976	1978
Access to B.Ed	1978	1979	1982 1983
Access to Diploma in Social Work	1983	1984	1986
Access to Business Studies	1983	1984	1988
Access to Maths and Physical Science	1983	1984	1987
Access to Law	1983	1984	1987
Access to Food Studies	1984	1985	1988
Access to Humanities and Librarianship.	1984	1985	1988

Table 2.

The Sample

Showing number of former students interviewed by cohort.
Figure in brackets (only available for DSW) shows
total population.

Year	BA. Bus.	B.Ed	DSW	Hum.	Law.	Sci.	
1978	0	0	5 [10]	0	0	0	
1979	0	0	3 [9]	-	-	-	
1980	-	-	1 [9]	-	-	-	
1981	-	-	3 [13]	-	-	-	
1982	-	-	3 [15]	-	-	-	
1983	-	-	13 [17]	-	-	-	
1984	-	6	2 [21]	-	-	-	
1985	1	5	5 [13]	-	-	-	
1986	-	9	12 [23]	-	1	1	
1987	1	8	-	-	-	1	
TOTALS	2	28	47	0	1	2	80

3 non-Access graduates
3 Access current PNL students intermitting for a year bring total interviewed to 86

Table 3

The Sample

Showing performance of former students interviewed by cohort.

Year	BA Bus.	B.Ed	DSW	Hum	Law	Sci
1978	0	0	5 5q			
1979			3 3q			
1980			1 1q			
1981			3 3q			
1982			3 3q			
1983			13 12q (1r)			
1984		6 4q 2w	2 2q			
1985	1 1w	5 4q 1w	5 4q 1w			
1986	0	9 9q	12 11q 1w	1 1w	1 1w	
1987	1 1w	8 8q	0 0		1 1q	
TOTALS		25q	45q		1q	

q = qualified
r = resit
w = withdrawal

Table 4

DSW Students Employment

Final Year	People	No. of jobs	No. of Promotions
1978	5	18	7
1979	3	9	6
1980	1	4	2
1981	3	7	5
1982	3	8	4
1983	13	27	9
1984	2	2	0
1985	5	7	3
1986	12	24	0

Table 5

BEd. Employment.

Final year	Number	Employment
1984	6	1 with no job. 2 with no job change (one not in teaching). 1 with one job change working in soc. serv. 1 with one job change with promotion. 1 with 2 job changes with promotion (Maths).
1985	5	1 with no job. 2 with no job change. 2 with one job change, including one promotion. 1 with 2 job changes with promotion (inc. supply July after qualification).
1986	9	4 with one job change since qualifying, one of these with promotion. 5 with no job change.
1987	8	Probation year (1 worked as supply June/July)

Table 6

DSW Students in-service courses

DSW: Length of In-Service Courses

Length	Year of Qualifying									
	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	total
1 day	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	5
1-5 days (inc w/end)	4	3	0	5	10	25	3	5	8	63
1-2 weeks	4	0	0	0	1	8	0	2	0	15
2-4 weeks	0	1	0	0	2	6	0	0	1	10
1-3 months	1	4	0	0	0	6	6	0	1	18
3-6 months	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
1/2 day per week 1 year	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	3
1 day/week 2 years	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
2 days/week 11 months	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
1 eve/week 1 year	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
1 eve/week 2 years	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1

Total number of courses = 122 of which 93 were for less and 29 for more than one month.

Table 7.

DSW Education and Training After PNL

In service Training	Length of	Number (year course of qualifying)
Policy re F and A	1-5 days	1(83) 1(86)
Policy re child abuse	1-5 days	2(82) 5(83) 1x3
Group work	1-5 days	1(79) 2x3(83) 2(86)
Race awareness	1 day/week for 6 months	1x3(78) 1(79) 4(83) 1(86)
Assertiveness training	1/2 day/week	1(86)
Management training	eve; 6 weeks	1(78) 1(79) 1(86)
Mental Health (race and culture unit)		1(85) 1(86)
Working with black families	1 day	1(84)
Mental health 2x4(84) 1(85)		3(79) 1(82) 3(83)
Child care legislation	6 days; 3 days	1(78) 3(83)
Working with W.African families		1(83)
Child sex abuse	3 days	1(78) 3(83)
Sickle cell anaemia	3 days	1(79) 1(83)
Working with women	3 days	1(83)
Family therapy	3 days	1(83)
Student supervision	2 weeks	1(79) 1(82) 4(83)
Applied SW training	20 days	2x2(83) 1(84)
Tribunals	1 week	1(83)
Women and race	weekend	1(83)
Race perspective and psychotherapy	weekend	1(83)
DHSS welfare rights	3 days	2(83)
Adoption and fosteri		1x4(83)
Equal opps.	3 days	1(83)
Working with voluntary orgs.	1 day	1(83)
Social work in court	1 week	1(82) 1(83)
Communication with children		1(83)
Practice teachers course	3 days	1(79) 1(83)
Post adoption	1 day	1(83)
Working with teenagers		1(82)
Working with the police		1(83)
Advanced S.W.		1(83)
Social work with children	1 day/week 2 years	2(83)
Advanced casework	1/2day/week 1 year	1(82) 1(83)
Adv.SW in mental health	2 days/week 1 year	1(83)
Counselling	eve/week 1-2 years	1(78) 1(81) 2(83)

Other courses

A level soc and Law	1yr p.t.	1(78)	1(81)	1(85)
Degree in politics	5 yr p.t.	1(85)		
MA Soc Policy (PNL)		1(85)		
MA Soc Legal Studies		1(85)		
MA Deviancy and Soc Policy	p.t.	1(81)	1(83)	
MA Soc Policy		1(83)		
MA Soc Policy		1(83)		
MA Bus and Soc Admin		1(83)		
BA Philosophy		1(78)		
BSc Psychology		1(78)		
LIB		1(78)		
Journalism course		1(83)		

alfa

☐ **Breaking the Barriers** Wendy Moss

This report describes the experiences of a group of women returning to educationand outlines the difficulties faced by them and the barriers within and without the institutions. "This booklet should be compulsory reading for every member of staff in all FE and HE institutions". (Bev Sand, FAST Journal, Autumn 1988). **£3.50**

☐ **This is a Lifetime Thing** Julia Clarke

This important study of adults in basic education and literacy classes charts the pro gression routes through the system into further and higher education. Through patient interviewing of students and tutors many issues are followed up and recommendations made which have implications for practical changes as well as for further research. **£2.50**

☐ **Access Enquirers - from Enquiry to Interview** Richard Payne

This report looks at the progress of enquirers for Access Courses from the first telephone call through to interview - for two contrasting courses held at colleges in North London.

It holds lessons for us all on how to improve the 'access' to Access Courses themselves. The writer points out problems, identifies good practice and makes seven major recommendations for anyone involved in recruiting or teaching Access students. **£2.50**

☐ **The Educational Needs of Adult Travellers**

Jonathan Cannon, Margaret Lee and Bernard Mends.

This report is the result of a survey of 88 adult Travellers in North East London. It identifies the educational requirements of a group whose needs are not usually met by the system. **£2.50**

Research Projects
Available by post from:
ALFA Room 306
The Marlborough Building
383 Holloway Road
London N7 0RN